DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 385 FL 019 973

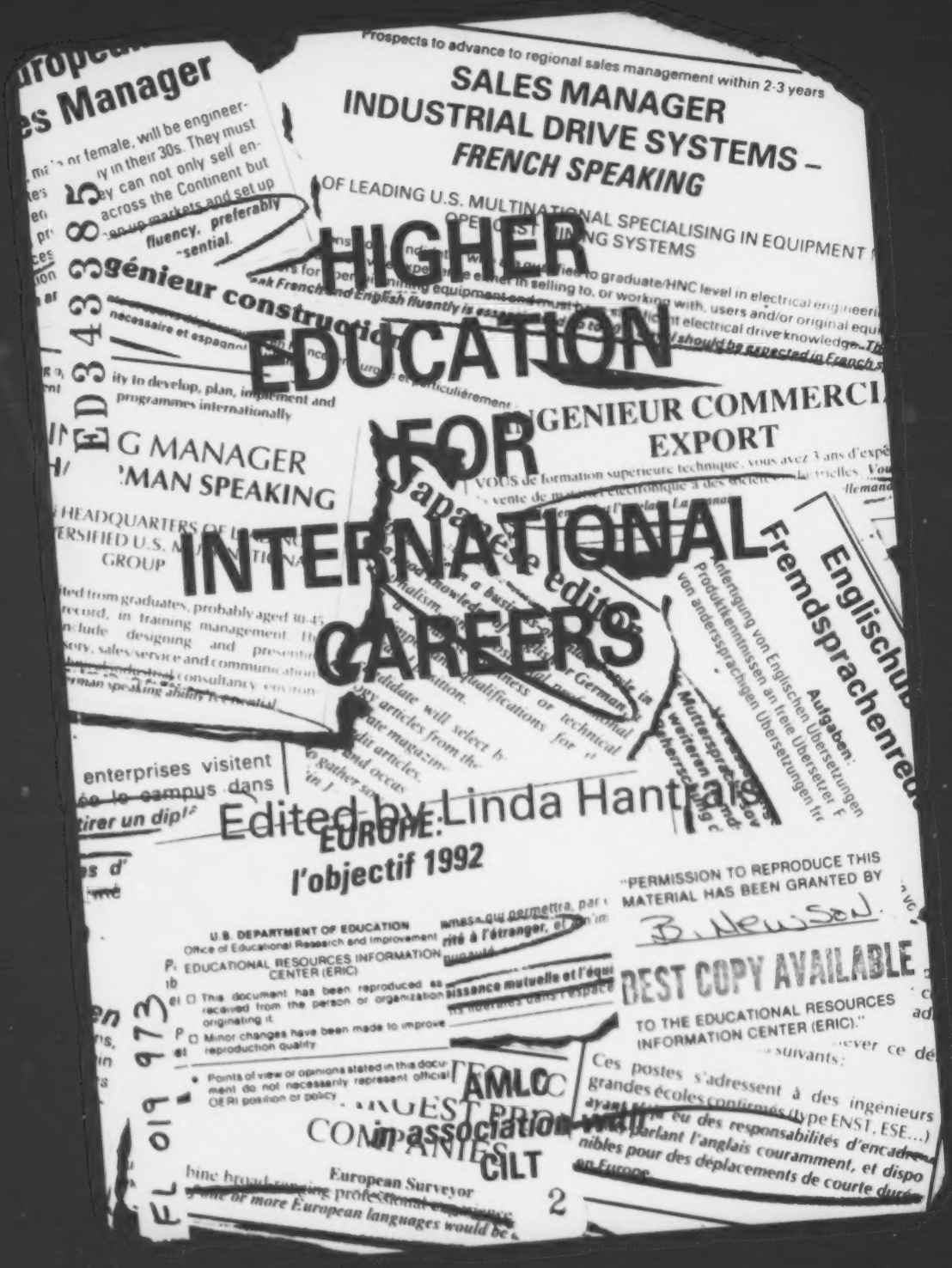
AUTHOR Hantrais, Linda, Ed.
TITLE Higher Education for International Careers.
INSTITUTION Aston Modern Languages Club, Birmingham (England).; Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, London (England).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-948003-72-3
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 92p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Awareness; Employment Opportunities; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *International Trade; *Labor Market; *Second Language Learning

ABSTRACT

This collection of papers explores the relationship between higher education and the labor market, with the focus firmly on graduates who are equipped to pursue international careers. A common theme in these papers is the concern that higher education in Great Britain provide the linguistic and cultural expertise needed for international dealings and that these qualities are used to the advantage of British industry and commerce. (JL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****


Prospects to advance to regional sales management within 2-3 years
SALES MANAGER
INDUSTRIAL DRIVE SYSTEMS –
FRENCH SPEAKING
HIGHER
EDUCATION
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
CAREERS
Edited by Linda Hantrais
EUROPE:
l'objectif 1992
Fremdsprachenreu
Englischu
enterprises visitent
"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
B. Newson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."
BEST COPY AVAILABLE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
AMLC
in association with
CILT
European Surveyor
2

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL CAREERS

Edited by

Linda Hantrais

AMLC in association with CILT

3

Higher Education for International Careers

edited by Linda Hantrais

© AMLC 1988

All rights reserved. No part of this publication should be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without permission.

First published 1988 by
AMLC in association with CILT

ISBN 0 948003 72 3

Set by
Laserprinter
Department of Modern Languages
Aston University
Aston Triangle
Birmingham B4 7ET

Printed by
Graphics and Reprographic Services
Aston University
Aston Triangle
Birmingham B4 7ET

Contents

Acknowledgements *vii*

Introduction *Linda Hantrais* *ix*

I International Programmes in Higher Education

Edmond Lisle The French experience 1
Bernd Wächter International programmes in German higher education 11

II Researching the Career Paths of Graduates

Philip McGeevor The graduate model 19
Colin Mellors Preparing for the international environment 28
Dennis E Ager Language skills and the real life tasks performed by language graduates 35

III Employment in International Settings

Anthony J Raban Employment opportunities for graduates within Europe 43

IV Employers' Needs for International Trade

Martin Doble The place of language skills in recruitment policy and practice 49
Diane Halfpenny What Courtaulds wants from graduates and what language graduates should be offering employers 52
David L Jones Language requirements at GKN Plc 54
John A S Watson How and why Beecham Products want to recruit linguists 58

V The Graduate's Experience of Working in the International Environment

Philip Jones	Working as an external trade executive for the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Limited	61
Joan C Stacey	From languages to engineering and export sales with Alcan Plate	65
Julian Staniforth	Working in France for Philips Electronics	67
Cathryn Whiteside	A graduate's experience as a marketing manager with Hewlett-Packard	70

Notes on Contributors 73

Acknowledgements

The editor wishes to thank the International Business Environment Group in the Faculty of Management and Modern Languages at Aston Univerity for their support in organising the conference at which many of the contributions included in this publication were first presented. We are grateful to Claire Turner for her hard work in typesetting the papers for this volume.

Introduction

Linda Hantrais

Department of Modern Languages, Aston University, Birmingham

Since the late 1970s there has been a steadily growing awareness of the importance for Britain's international trade of employing personnel who are able to operate effectively in and across different cultures. This awareness has stimulated contact between industry and the educational world. The shared interest of business and higher education in international communication has been pursued through conferences, needs analysis surveys, training intiatives for companies, studies of graduate employment opportunities and exchanges between careers advisory services and employers. Often the results have been positive, although there are still many problems to overcome before a complete match is achieved between the perceived needs of employers and educational provision.

Already in the 1970s conferences were being organised which brought together educationalists and industrialists to discuss issues of mutual concern (see for example those listed by Wilding, 1980), and many more have been held since. Studies have been carried out over the past decade by academic institutions, or have been coordinated by them, to assess the language needs of companies (for example Ager, 1977; Lowe, 1979), to survey the educational provision for international business (Liston and Reeves, 1985) and also the language training and specialist language services available to companies in different parts of the country (Hagen, 1988). These studies illustrate how access to foreign markets may be prevented by the inability to trade in other languages and suggest ways of remedying the problems identified.

An important outcome of this research has been the launching of collaborative ventures between business and educational institutions, with support from the Manpower Services Commission and the Department of Education and Science. The aim of the consortia which have been established is typically to "identify and resolve industrial and commercial needs in international communications", as exemplified by IC (Language and Communication Services) Ltd, at the Aston Science Park under the PICKUP initiative. A new national network of centres (the LX, or language export, network) is currently being set up to help firms overcome obstacles to success in overseas trade.

At the same time — more often in parallel rather than in collaboration with the other work described — higher education has been preoccupied with finding out how language graduates are using their preparation for employment in the international environment. Since the mid-1970s studies have been conducted of the career paths of graduates with modern languages, international business or European studies degrees, in order to discover how they use their language skills in performing communication tasks in authentic situations (reported, for example, in Emmans et al., 1974; Hantrais, 1985; Mellors and Copperthwaite, 1985). The information derived from these longitudinal studies has been a valuable resource in the redesign of syllabuses and in rethinking teaching methods, leading, for example, to new integrated degree programmes in international business and modern languages in a number of institutions. The aim of such courses, which are mushrooming in British higher education around the country, is to produce graduates who possess not only a high level of language competence but also managerial skills and the much sought-after knowledge of the international business environment.

These programmes do not, however, provide the technical background which employers also want, and British higher education still has a long way to go before it can compete with some of its continental neighbours in combining technological training with management skills and language expertise. Since more undergraduates are now studying for part of their degree in another European country, and many graduates from Britain will be competing for key positions within Europe, it is important to understand the rationale behind programmes in other European countries and to know what qualities their graduates can offer. Another aspect of the research into employment in international settings has therefore been to examine the training graduates receive elsewhere in Europe.

The findings from these different studies suggest that, while British industry would seem to be losing international trade because it does not have linguistically competent personnel, graduates, who are proficient in foreign languages and also have a thorough knowledge of other cultures, discover that companies consider language skills as a bonus but not an essential qualification. Elsewhere in Europe, on the other hand, language proficiency is recognised as an essential prerequisite for many careers in commercial and industrial fields. If the comments from British graduates are read in conjunction with surveys of what employers define as their needs in terms of language skills, a second paradox becomes apparent: employers may consider languages as no more than a secondary skill, yet

they expect graduate level proficiency or native fluency in order to conduct international negotiations effectively.

These paradoxes indicate the dilemma faced by many companies who do not have a constant need for language specialists and claim they cannot afford to employ an individual whose skills will be underused. They also point to a misconception: many employers in Britain believe language graduates are isolated from the real world and that they learn foreign language solely for their cultural value. In reality, the majority of modern languages graduates who are completing their degrees today have not been trained in the traditional literary mould. Graduates from the many language courses which place emphasis on knowledge of the socio-cultural, political and economic institutions of foreign countries possess much more that is relevant to international dealings than did their predecessors, a message which clearly needs to be conveyed more widely. The Association for Graduate Careers Advisory Services and the Careers Research and Advisory Centre, who are called upon to act as intermediaries between the academic world and employers, are trying to ensure that graduates are made aware of the opportunities available to them for working in international settings (Raban and Tobin, 1985; CRAC, 1987). Recognising the reluctance of employers to place much value on a degree in languages, their advice is, however, generally to underplay language skills.

The interest of these examples is that they demonstrate both the value of cooperation between higher education and the world of international affairs and its limitations. In an attempt to further contacts and the mutual benefits to be derived from them, while also trying to overcome the problems of convincing companies of the employability of language graduates, a conference was convened in January 1988 at Aston University on the theme of Higher Education for International Careers. The providers of higher education services, the users of those services, as well as their products (graduate employees) and the intermediaries between providers and users (careers advisory officers) were represented amongst the contributors and the participants, who met together to examine the relationship between language learning and its applications in international settings and to discuss trends, issues and future prospects.

Most of the papers in this publication were presented at the conference, but other invited contributions have been added. In that all the authors address the subject of employment in the international environment, the papers are thematically linked and interdependent. Perspectives on the subject differ, however, according to the institutional and cultural affiliations of the contributors. Logically the papers could

have been presented in any order, but the decision was taken to follow the chronology of the graduate. The collection therefore begins with a survey of some of the international undergraduate programmes, before moving on to look at research findings on the international employment careers of graduates, followed by an analysis of opportunities for working in Europe. Finally, accounts are presented of employers' needs for international trade and the actual experience of graduates working in international settings. Since the graduates explain how their degree programmes prepared them for employment, their papers complete the circle.

The first section deals with international programmes in higher education. While looking at some specific examples of such programmes in France, Edmond Lisle also raises a number of points which are relevant to other countries. He stresses the way that language study in higher education has become more concerned with applications to real life situations and with knowledge of language and cultural contexts, not only for business managers but — and this would seem to be the case in France rather than in Britain — also for scientists, engineers and social scientists. Language is not seen as a separate discipline, and integration is put into practice in French higher education by involving professionals from the non-academic world in teaching their specialism in their own language, thus leading to close ties between industry, commerce and higher education and also to a better understanding by students of different national approaches to their subjects. The French system, with its selective *grandes écoles*, provides an interesting model of higher education, which the British may be well advised to heed, if they do not want to find themselves excluded from highly technical and competitive international markets because of their parochial attitudes and their language deficiences.

In concluding that students should be encouraged to be more mobile internationally, Edmond Lisle provides a link to Bernd Wächter's paper, which looks at different types of international programmes within Europe, with special reference to joint degrees, and particularly those between the German Federal Republic, France and Britain. While stressing the value of such programmes and the advantages of student mobility within Europe, the author does not conceal the many problems which have to be overcome if bi- or tri-national programmes are to be successful. Nor does he advocate their unlimited extension, particularly in a context where exchange schemes are often underfunded, and insufficient recognition is given to the very high input of staff time and commitment in operating them.

The comments made by the two contributors from outside Britain are particularly relevant at a time when schemes, such as ERASMUS and COMETT, are encouraging greater mobility of the student population. The prospect of free movement around Europe in 1992 is providing an added incentive for British higher education not only to ensure that it can compete on equal terms, but also to make it more aware of what happens elsewhere. A logical conclusion which might be drawn from Edmond Lisle's paper is that it will be in the interests of British recruiters to look towards Europe for the graduates they need, unless the home institutions can produce the right mix of international skills. Bernd Wächter's paper would suggest that there is a steady supply of suitably qualified graduates from the international programmes which could go some way towards satisfying the needs of the labour market.

In the second section of the papers, the focus shifts to an analysis of graduate careers, based on the findings from follow-up studies of graduate employment in Britain. Since it seems likely that the performance indicators used to judge the success of degree courses will, in the future, include the occupation of graduates eighteen months and five years after graduation, academics in British higher education need to pay careful attention to the career patterns of their students. This is an area in which the British may be able to offer a model to their European neighbours, for relatively little interest has been shown elsewhere in the career paths of graduates, yet alone of those in languages and European studies. Another distinctive feature of the British scene is that careers advisers provide a vital link between graduates and employers. The function they fulfil has not been developed elsewhere in Europe in the university sector to the same extent, although the most reputed *grandes écoles* do have a tradition of establishing directories of their former students' employment. They also maintain thriving old boy networks, which may serve to further career prospects.

In a theoretical paper, Philip McGeevor uses the Graduate Model of employment in order to conceptualise the way in which different degree courses relate to the labour market. He argues that occupational relevance is only one of a number of criteria which can be used in evaluating degree programmes, but that British employers may be more interested in form rather than content and knowledge. Modern linguists have the advantage — at least in theory — on the labour market of being able to offer not only generalist and transferable skills (as exemplified in the capacity for critical and independent thought and the ability to process information quickly), which are readily recognised by employers and much sought after, but also specialist linguistic and cultural knowledge and the much prized ability to communicate

effectively orally and in writing. In a situation where most graduate recruitment is not degree specific, linguists should therefore possess some very marketable assets. In concluding, the author refers to one of the findings from the Higher Education and the Labour Market survey of graduates from polytechnics in Britain, which suggests that, while they may not be aware of the competition on the horizon, many graduates in the sciences and engineering realise regretfully, several years after completing their course, that they did not have a sufficient opportunity to study languages as part of their degrees.

Colin Mellors bases his comments on empirical work which has followed the careers of graduates reading a language as one subject on a European studies degree. He stresses the importance in European studies courses of understanding and sympathising with the norms and values of other societies. For this category of graduates, employment in international business is not the only option. Many European studies courses focus on the European Community institutions, and their graduates are therefore well prepared for employment in public administration within the EC member states. Recognising the interest of the findings from the Bradford study, the Universities Association for Contemporary European Studies is funding an extension of the project to other institutions in Britain, and the new nationwide survey will be coordinated from Bradford.

In his paper, Dennis Ager examines the results from a research project, supported by the British Academy, into the usefulness of language skills acquired in higher education, based on a sample of language graduates from two British universities. He confirms the importance of the generalist skills possessed by language graduates but also looks at the range of linguistic and cultural knowledge required by real life communicative tasks in the employment context. The value of this study is that it looks behind the broad categorisation of skills and matches them to specific tasks and strategies, drawing out some useful pointers for syllabus designers. An important finding is that the greater the degree of competence and efficiency in the language, the less time graduates waste in accomplishing tasks. This result reinforces the conviction held in many languages departments that a high level of linguistic expertise should continue to be an essential objective of language programmes in higher education.

Joint programmes, the greater mobility of undergraduates within Europe and the acquisition of generalist and specialist skills are all likely to enhance the employability of British graduates in other European countries, which is the theme of the third section of the papers.

The British educational system at both secondary and tertiary level has been criticised for its excessively narrow focus and for lacking an international dimension. Despite their level of specialisation, graduates most often enter employment for which their degrees have not directly prepared them, since only a small proportion of openings are degree specific. As Tony Râban shows, the concept of the generalist recruit is less acceptable in continental Europe. The traditional British graduate expects to undergo further specialist training after completing a first degree, particularly for work in fields such as business or public administration, while the graduate from continental Europe will already have a recognised professional qualification. In considering the concept of the right to employment within Europe, Tony Raban therefore sounds a note of caution: the British graduate aspiring to employment in an international setting will have problems with the relationship between degree subjects and types of employment and with the equivalence and recognition of qualifications. Although agreement has now been reached within the member countries of the EC that three years of higher education will be counted as equivalent everywhere, the advice to graduates is that, for the moment, they need to explain how their qualifications equate to local ones.

Age on graduation also presents difficulties: as the length of higher education in Britain is shorter than in most other countries in Europe, British graduates are likely to be much younger than their European counterparts on completion of a first degree. Tony Raban recommends that the best way of securing a position in the EC countries is by gaining appropriate experience and, if necessary, undergoing further training in Britain, leaving the age problem to resolve itself. Like Edmond Lisle, he stresses the value for employment in the EC of the wider cultural and political knowledge and transnational understanding acquired through undergraduate courses with an international focus, and particularly those which include a period of study or work abroad.

Following on logically from a survey of some of the international programmes, the research which has been conducted into the careers of graduates and their employment opportunities in Europe, the papers in the fourth and fifth sections present the views and experience of several employers operating in international settings and of language graduates who are pursuing international careers.

Four employers, two of whom are themselves language graduates, describe their expectations of graduates looking for employment in international trade, as well as their perceptions of the available pool of suitably qualified applicants. As managing director of the Addison Group, a medium-sized international management consultancy, Martin

Doble, himself a graduate from one of the modern languages degree programmes, is in a position to compare British graduate recruits with their American counterparts: he finds that British graduates more often possess the essential generalist and transferable skills, mentioned by Philip McGeevor, but that they also have a greater awareness of other cultures, an asset also referred to by other contributors. The British modern languages degree is therefore perceived almost as a guarantee that the recruit will possess the qualities and skills required of the job.

Adopting a different stance, David Jones, of the Corporate Audit Department of GKN Plc, presents the view of his company that, for work within Europe, English is often the *lingua franca* and that, where English is widely spoken, no attempt is made to find speakers of the foreign language. Even when language capabilities are needed, recruits are expected first and foremost to have professional knowledge and expertise in a particular field, such as accountancy or law; language proficiency is very much a secondary requirement. The preference of GKN is to recruit the subject specialist and add on the language, if necessary, rather than the reverse. The level of language demanded is, however, very high, and the range of specialist subject vocabularies needed is extensive.

As a representative of Courtaulds Plc, Diane Halfpenny reiterates the same message: although the Company recruits linguists for sales, marketing and commercial work, languages are not the prime requirement and are not likely to be put to use before a period of intensive training in marketing and technical skills. She does not conceal how difficult and lonely working abroad can be. The Company therefore stresses that it is looking primarily for personal qualities displayed in the ability to communicate effectively, to establish long-term working relationships and to act as a ambassador, both for the Company and the UK, and these are qualities which the languages graduate may or may not possess.

John Watson's own experience, as well as his work in the Personnel Services Department of Beecham Products, leads him to reinforce the points made by David Jones that the international working language of company managers is English and that proficiency in foreign languages is no more than a bonus. In the sales area, however, the Company recognises the need to be aware of local factors which may determine the success of a product launch, and it is therefore looking for graduates who combine a high level of language proficiency and cultural knowledge with expertise in business techniques and strategies. John Watson recognises that the joint international study programmes and the international business and languages degrees are providing an answer to the perceived needs of companies such as Beecham Products and GKN.

The accounts given by Philip Jones, Julian Staniforth, Joan Stacey and Cathryn Whiteside of their own experiences and their views on the relevance of their undergraduate education to their work in international settings demonstrate that there may be more than one way of learning all the skills expected by employers in the international business environment. In each case the graduates concerned first acquired linguistic and cultural expertise through their degree studies: three of them graduated in modern languages, having read two European languages to degree level, and one obtained a degree in a language and business studies. Subsequently, they added on specialist business and technical skills, giving the lie to the widely held assumption that employers' needs can best be met by providing language training for graduates in other subjects rather than the reverse.

The languages studied by Philip Jones and Julian Staniforth lay dormant for several years before eventually enabling them to achieve their present positions. As Tony Raban recommends, they first acquired further qualifications and experience to prepare them for work in an international setting. Cathryn Whiteside, while not actively using her languages at the moment, recognises that they led to opportunities for working in an international company. When languages are an essential tool of the trade, as for Philip Jones and Joan Stacey, or the working language of the company, as for Julian Staniforth, the fact of having achieved a very high level of fluency, underpinned by wider cultural knowledge, is shown to play a vital part in ensuring employees are credible partners in international dealings.

By referring to the aspects of their undergraduate courses which they felt had helped to prepare them for employment in international settings, the graduates' accounts of their experience bring us back to the starting point in the collection. In the opening paper, Edmond Lisle stressed the importance in any international exchange of the awareness of different cultural traditions, and this theme recurs like a leitmotiv throughout the contributions. Even if the language of an international team in a multinational organisation is English, those managing the team can gain from an understanding of the cultural characteristics of nationals from different countries. A lesson which might be drawn from the comments of all the contributors on the same theme is that, although most employers are interested in the ability of the graduate to operate within a very narrow specialism, it is not enough for an employee working in an international setting simply to know the vocabulary of that specialism. An in-depth knowledge and understanding of the wider socio-economic, cultural and political environment are also essential ingredients.

A wide range of cultural knowledge is now a standard component in many of the degree programmes in British higher education. When it is closely integrated with language study to a high level of oral and written fluency, graduates can be said to possess the generalist and transferable skills as well as specialist skills, referred to by Philip McGeevor, and at the same time the courses concerned have academic respectability and viability.

The views expressed in the papers confirm that many employers are not yet fully aware of what language graduates from higher education can offer, and graduates from the more innovatory programmes may need to work harder in marketing their own skills, with assistance from careers advisory officers. Even if greater awareness is achieved, important differences in priorities may remain unresolved. Ideally employers are looking for graduates who possess technological, business and language skills, as well as cultural knowledge. Although the example from France would suggest that the products of the *grandes écoles* answer all these requirements, the British system is not currently in a position to do so, perhaps, it might be posited, because degree courses are too short, and because early specialisation at school means that students lack the necessary grounding in a wide range of subjects. The British aversion for engineering can perhaps be blamed for the failure of attempts to establish courses in industrial studies and languages, which might have gone some way to providing a solution.

All the contributors agree that Britain is part of an international and multilingual community in which it needs to be able to operate effectively, but views differ about how best to achieve this goal. The papers point to several directions which higher education might take: British degree programmes could be lengthened and extended to cover a wider range of subjects; more graduates could supplement their first degree in languages with further professional training in an educational establishment, a company or a combination of the two; more specialist language courses could be offered at postgraduate level to graduates in other subjects; more undergraduates could be encouraged to read a combination of subjects which cross the binary divide (for example metallurgy or pharmacy with French, or German with chemistry) and to spend part of their period as an undergraduate in an industrial or professional training placement abroad, perhaps within the framework of a joint studies programme; employers could recruit graduates from elsewhere in Europe who already have appropriate qualifications and linguistic expertise.

The last solution is clearly one which it would not be in the interests of British education to pursue, unless there is a similar movement in the

opposite direction. If British graduates are to be in a position to compete, and they already have the advantage of being able to offer English as a native language, efforts are needed to ensure they have equivalent training and experience, and in particular foreign language expertise. Academics committed to languages degree programmes with a contemporary orientation would argue that it is vital to study languages intensively over several years in order to achieve a high level and that marketing and technical skills can be acquired afterwards. The graduates' accounts in this collection of papers lend support to this view. Engineers and scientists would also maintain their subjects cannot be adequately mastered in postgraduate courses and must include prolonged periods of exposure to the workplace, an opinion shared by industrialists. The argument is less strongly defended by marketing specialists or accountants, and many companies prefer, in fact, to provide their own in-service training. Accountancy is very much a profession where training usually begins after graduation (in any subject). Joint international study programmes and combined subject courses probably offer a good compromise, but they reduce the amount on time that can be spent on each subject and normally offer only partial exemption from professional examinations. Short intensive postgraduate courses in languages for graduates in business or engineering might go some way towards answering the needs of employment in international settings, but they are unlikely to produce the level of proficiency which is expected of a successful negotiator.

In the longer term it would seem that expertise in a language and the cultural knowledge, which is a necessary concomitant, have to be recognised as skills which can only be achieved after a lengthy period of training and practical experience, and it is important that they should be valued as such. The real answer, as Edmond Lisle suggests, may be to build an international component into the educational process at all levels. International collaboration is now being much more actively promoted throughout Europe, and there are encouraging signs, as witnessed by the examples given in the papers in this collection, that joint ventures, which are both international and interdisciplinary, can be successful.

REFERENCES

Ager, D.E. (1977) *Language and Training in Leyland International* (Summary Report), Aston University, Birmingham.

British Overseas Trade Board (1979) *Foreign Languages for Overseas Trade: A Report by the BOTB Study Group on Foreign Languages*, BOTB, London.

Careers for Research and Advisory Centre (1987) Courses and Careers in Europe, Conferences held in London.

Emmans, K., Hawkins, E. and Westoby, A. (1974) *Foreign Languages in Industry/Commerce*, Language Teaching Centre, University of York.

Hagen, S. (ed.) (1988) *Language in British Business: An Analysis of Current Needs*, Newcastle upon Tyne Products Ltd and CILT, Newcastle and London.

Hantrais, L. (1985) *Using Languages in a Career: An Analysis of the Careers of Language Graduates*, AMLC, Birmingham.

Liston, D. and Reeves, N. (1985) *Business Studies, Languages and Overseas Trade: A Study of Education and Training*, Macdonald and Evans and the Institute of Export, Plymouth and London.

Lowe, J. (1979) *The New Euromanagers: An Examination of the Training and Development Requirements of Future UK Managers in Europe*, Woodhead-Faulkner, Cambridge.

Mellors, C. and Copperthwaite, N. (1985) Using a European Studies Degree, *Modern Languages*, 66 (3), 167-74.

Raban, A.J. and Tobin, C. (1985) *Opportunities to Work in the European Community's Institutions*, AGCAS Information Booklet, Cambridge University Careers Service, Cambridge.

Wilding, C. (1980) *Languages and Education and Industry: A Summary of Reports and Conferences*, Aston University, Birmingham.

I INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The French Experience

Edmond Lisle

International Comparisons Programme, CNRS, Paris

Several years ago, a Japanese businessman, operating very successfully in France, was being interviewed by an American journalist, representing the *San Francisco Sun*. The American reporter asked the Japanese businessman what international language he used in his business dealings, obviously expecting the answer to be English or American. Much to his surprise, the reply was: "The international language I use is my customer's language". This anecdote epitomises the change that has occurred over the past generation in the purpose of language teaching. One of the results is that we talk today about 'modern' languages rather than 'foreign' languages among non-English speaking countries.

To caricature the situation, in the early 1950s languages were taught as a subject *per se*, for their cultural value, to train language teachers and to give a broader cultural education to an élite, some of whom would later become diplomats, much as in earlier days, Latin and Greek had been used. Modern languages were taught rather as classical languages. At that time, in France, Britain and Germany there was no link whatever between humanities and languages on the one hand and, on the other, the social sciences, law and management, and even less so with the natural sciences and with engineering.

Although reference in this paper is specifically to the French experience, the same analysis could be applied in Britain and Germany, in other West European countries and Japan. Today languages, or rather international training (and the shift in vocabulary is significant), are closely integrated into professional training, such as engineering, management and law, in order to prepare students in those fields for international careers. To a lesser extent they are integrated too into social science curricula to enable social science researchers to develop

international comparative studies in those disciplines. Increasingly in the natural sciences, for physicists, chemists, biologists, proficiency in foreign languages is a necessity. English is still predominant, but it is no longer exclusively English which is needed in order to be able to work in multinational teams (for instance at the Centre Européen de la Recherche Nucléaire, in Geneva, the Institut von Laue-Langevin in Grenoble or the Hawaii Observatory), or in a laboratory in another country. In most French or German laboratories, scientists are fluent enough in English to be able to read the literature of their disciplines. Yet if the English scientist is going to work in a French or German laboratory, he cannot rely on the fact that his colleagues there will speak enough English for him to get by without knowing their language. He must learn to speak and operate in French or German.

In presenting the French experience, two case histories will be used to illustrate the main thrust of the argument: my own work with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and that of Celia Russo with the Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées.

Before looking at these two examples, it is worth reminding readers of the general structure of the French educational system. French higher education has a dual structure. On the one hand there are about one hundred university establishments, with approximately a million students. The universities are attached to the Ministry of Education and Science. Alongside them is the CNRS, France's leading scientific establishment, which is roughly the equivalent of the five research councils in Britain rolled into one. The CNRS conducts research, full time, with 25,000 staff. The universities teach all disciplines, there is no selection on entry, provided applicants have the *baccalauréat*. The staff-student ratio is fairly low, precisely because access is open to all *bacheliers*. The teaching in all disciplines is both general and vocational. Management and engineering are taught in the universities. Career prospects range from very poor to very good.

Opposite, or alongside the universities, are the *grandes écoles*, which form the élite network. The *grandes écoles* are for the most part attached to ministries other than Education. Some of the *grandes écoles*, both in engineering and management, are private and belong to the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, so they are very closely linked to the business community. There are about 140 such institutions, combined within the Conférence des Grandes Ecoles. The overall student population is under 150,000, there is a highly competitive entrance examination, practically no drop-out, a high staff-student ratio, teaching is focused mainly in the sciences, engineering and management, it is entirely vocational and leads

to very good career prospects. Both these systems have developed training programmes for international careers.

My personal experience within the French system provides an interesting pointer to the way attitudes towards language have changed in recent years. In 1953 I emigrated to France, as a young PPE graduate of about three years' standing, and joined a French research institution in economics in Paris. The head of the institute, François Perroux, one of France's leading economists, asked me to initiate a course on English for economists at the Faculté de Droit et des Sciences Economiques de Paris. At the time this was a very innovative idea and was scorned by his colleagues who did not see the need. One of Perroux's catch phrases was: "English for economists is rather similar to Latin for theologians." He thought that French economists really had to have a working knowledge of English if they were to be any good in their discipline. The course in English was entirely optional and experimental and was only offered to postgraduates. The method I adopted was to get the French students to read authors such as Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Ricardo, Karl Marx, Alfred Marshall, Keynes and Samuelson in the text and to conduct discussions about the material in English.

By 1959 this teaching method had become compulsory in economics and law in all French universities. Due to the fact that the French university system is highly centralised, it was relatively easy to extend the practice. A reform introduced in 1959 required compulsory instruction in languages for economists and lawyers, the languages being English and German, and to some extent Russian, for economists, and Spanish for lawyers. At postgraduate level there were examination papers in languages. French lawyers were required to have a knowledge of common law and especially of legal concepts in Britain or Germany at the same time as they were learning French civil law. The example of law is relevant to what language teaching is about today, because it involves training for international careers and using languages not just as a means of enriching knowledge about culture, or even for communication, but rather as a tool in exercising a profession. It is obvious that it is not enough for a lawyer, brought up in the common law tradition, to have a smattering of French, even classical French, or German, to be any good as a lawyer. He/she must be proficient in French civil law. Conversely, it is not enough for a French lawyer to have *baccalauréat*-level English to do international business. He/she must have knowledge of English or American common law, which is something different. As business becomes more and more international within the EC, it is essential that people in management and in the legal profession receive language

training which involves the acquisition of knowledge about the other country's legal system and tradition.

There are several examples of universities which arrange exchange visits to enable undergraduates to pursue their specialist study in another country: Leicester University in Britain has a joint programme with the University of Strasbourg III in France. The Leicester students have an additional year (i.e. a four-year law degree), the third year being spent in Strasbourg following courses in French and European law, which leads to a joint degree at the end. Similarly the French students spend part of their course in Britain studying the British legal system.

At the research level in the legal field, recently there has been an example of collaboration, in which the ESRC and the CNRS have jointly supported a research project on contracts in common and civil law. The research was undertaken by an English team from the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies at Oxford and a French team from the Institut de Recherche Juridique et Comparative in Paris. The results have been published in French and English (Harris and Tallon, 1987). In addition to being a remarkable piece of scholarship, this study will be invaluable to business, because contracts are different in many respects, and these differences cannot be ignored by those who are doing business between Britain and France. This is just one example of the way in which we are moving in teaching languages, and where language is a tool of the trade. The two teams have worked together, and on each side there is sufficient fluency and proficiency in the other language to be able to do joint comparative work and produce a joint result which shows what the significant differences are in contracts for business.

Language as a tool of the trade is a concept which it is important to stress in international training. Language is not just a means of communicating or of gaining access to another country's culture. It is the tool with which to operate professionally in carrying out jobs such as those of a scientist, an engineer or a manager. In moving from one language to another or from one culture to another, thought processes are different. Reasoning is ordered differently, and language is the medium through which this ordering takes place. In the social sciences, concepts themselves are generally culture-specific, although this is not the case in the natural sciences: an atom is an atom everywhere, and a molecule is a molecule, and there is a common language in mathematics, physics and chemistry. There is not, however, a common language in economics, and even less so in sociology, business science, constitutional law or government. If joint research projects in the social sciences are to be developed between countries, social scientists need to know enough about the language and the cultural tradition of the country they are

working on to be able to carry out scholarly comparative research projects. This is very important for the social sciences because international comparative studies are the equivalent of the controlled laboratory experiment in the natural sciences (see Lisle, 1985). It is not possible for the researcher to do a controlled experiment in his/her own country if he/she wants, for example, to find out more about the way society adjusts to and organises its policy with respect to education or to an ageing population. In looking at what a particular country does, the observer is in fact entirely bound by the culture, tradition, institutions, law and social security system of that country. He/she can only begin to understand how a society functions, reacts, adapts and adjusts to a particular problem by looking at another society, within another context or another tradition, to see what the common results are. International comparative studies provide the controlled experiment for the social scientist. In order to be able to adopt this approach, social scientists, be they sociologists, political scientists, historians or economists, must know enough about the other country's, or other countries', language, culture and civilisation to be able to operate together as a team and bring out the significant differences between basic concepts.

The CNRS and the ESRC are promoting joint Franco-British collaborative ventures, precisely with this aim in mind. Within the CNRS the policy is to train scientists in languages, so that they become more proficient for international collaboration. The CNRS runs an optional in-house training scheme, which is available to staff at several levels. The main purpose is to ensure fluency in reading and abstracting scientific literature in a particular field in foreign languages, mainly — but not exclusively — in English. A chemist, physicist or astronomer has to be able to read scientific literature in other languages. Some languages are dominant internationally: in the case of geography, French is a very important language, as is English and also Russian, because there is a Russian tradition in the discipline. Other countries' languages are important in the social sciences: Hispanic or Italian literature cannot, for example, be neglected. English literature provides a very biased example of the total output of scientific literature in the social sciences, and many people are insufficiently aware of this in English-speaking countries.

The second level of expertise is the ability to participate in international research meetings by being able to understand spoken English. It is still true to say that the main *lingua franca* of international workshops, seminars and conferences is English, not necessarily Queen's English, nor even American English, but perhaps Pacific English or South East Asian English. Many researchers may be able to understand a written text in their discipline but cannot understand when they hear it

spoken and are far less capable still of expressing themselves in that language orally. The CNRS organises training schemes to enable people to achieve sufficient fluency in the spoken and oral word to participate in conferences. Intensive language tuition is also provided for scientists about to go abroad for a short or long study visit; training schemes are arranged for secretaries within research laboratories; the ability to sustain a telephone conversation in English or other languages is taught as well as understanding and typing letters in those languages. Because international collaboration is essential for scientific research, scientists must be in a position to understand and participate in other languages.

The second personal experience which is relevant to higher education for international careers is taken from one of the *grandes écoles* in the field of engineering and management and concerns another British expatriate, Celia Russo, who was born and brought up in Britain, undertook further education in Argentina and the US, and then settled in France in 1973. In 1974 she was asked to set up the Language and International Department of one of the engineering schools of the Paris Chamber of Commerce, the school for electrical and electronic engineering. Six years later in 1980, she was selected by France's élite school of civil engineering, the Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, to create the new department for international trade which the school had decided to establish. The rationale behind this decision by Ponts et Chaussées was that over fifty per cent of the income of France's civil engineering industry was being earned abroad, the percentage was increasing, and the earnings were coming increasingly from non-francophone countries. It was therefore seen as absolutely essential that French civil engineers should no longer be trained merely as highly skilled engineers, which they are, but should also be reasonably fluent in at least two foreign languages, one of them being English. At the same time they were expected to be sufficiently aware of the differences that exist between various countries in order to be able to operate successfully in their professional capacity in contexts which are very different from traditional French or francophone culture.

The basic features of this new Department of International Trade at the Ponts et Chaussées were firstly that languages and civilisation, including the literature of politics, were taught jointly. This approach may not be original, but the other basic feature, which is much more original, is that visiting professors and scholars at the Ponts et Chaussées, for example in soil mechanics, materials resistance or physics, are invited to give lectures in their mother tongue and to conduct seminars in these subjects as a compulsory part of the course. Most of them are professors from Britain or the US, some are from Germany, and a few

come from other countries like Israel. The purpose is to get students who have been brought up in the French tradition as engineers to realise that the same subject, for example soil mechanics, is approached and presented in a different way if the researcher has been brought up in the anglophone, or the English or American tradition, than if he/she has been brought up in the French tradition. The subject is the same, but the approach and presentation are different. The students are therefore able to understand the different mind and thought process in other languages through studying their own subject, and not through language training. In this approach language training is spliced into the basic engineering curriculum. The same engineers follow an English programme on economic analysis as applied to large-scale civil engineering or industrial projects.

The experiment at Ponts et Chaussées was so successful that it has been followed by other *grandes écoles* within the Conférence des Grandes Ecoles. This type of teaching has also been widely disseminated by the European Society for Engineering Training (Société Européenne pour la Formation des Ingénieurs) (Russo, 1985). The SEFI has been very active in the past five or six years in promoting courses in engineering for French, German, Scandinavian and Italian engineers to help them to move around in other countries. Courses in their own disciplines by the nationals of other countries give them the opportunity to get used to the way people think in other European languages and cultures.

Finally, in the third initiative, the governing board of the Ponts et Chaussées decided in 1986 to add a new course to their curriculum in the form of a professorial Chair in Training for Export. This chair to which Celia Russo has been appointed — she designed the course— has features which are quite distinctive for an engineering college. The course, which is optional, is taught entirely in English, and it runs for about 300 hours over two years. About a quarter of the students follow the course, and it counts towards their final degree in engineering. The subjects covered include international business environment, international business and fiscal law, international management, export techniques and strategies for international marketing. There is a permanent teaching staff of a professor and one or two assistants, but most of the instructors are English or American professionals, export managers, international lawyers or international tax specialists, generally based in Paris, who operate professionally in these fields and come for two-hour sessions each week.

The rationale of the Ponts et Chaussées, behind the decision taken in 1980 to set up a department aimed at enabling civil engineers to work

abroad, corresponds to the concept of briefing for international careers or for overseas posting, along the lines of the service provided by Farnham Castle in Britain. The rationale behind the decision taken in 1986 by the Ponts et Chaussées to set up this course on international management goes one step further. It is based on the premise that an engineer today is not concerned only with technology. He is generally managing or directing a large-scale project, such as setting up an oil rig in the North Sea or the Gulf of Mexico, building the cross-Channel tunnel or the Cairo or Caracas underground systems. In other words the civil engineer today, but this would also be true of the mining engineer or the mechanical engineer, is performing an international contract. The contractor specifies that a particular product, or set of products, has to be supplied by specified dates, at specified prices, and there are penalties if the contract is not met. The engineer is managing an international workforce, people from different origins, for instance for a project in the Persian Gulf with a workforce in the international oil companies. He is accountable to the general manager of an international or multinational corporation.

The concept is rather similar to that behind the joint committees of the Science and Engineering Research and Economic and Social Research Councils in trying to merge together people with an engineering or scientific background and those with a social sciences background, with the object of getting them to work together because that is what business is about today. An engineer or a lawyer needs to have some insight into the discipline of the other person he is working with. What is being done at the Ponts et Chaussées with the international management for engineers goes one step further: it is integrating and promoting cross-disciplinarity, but with an additional international slant. The prerequisites, or the requirements, of two training objectives are being compounded: the ability first to perform in an international environment, which implies language skills and awareness of and interest in different cultures; and, in addition, the ability to act as the project manager of a multidisciplinary group, associating engineers and social scientists, particularly lawyers, which implies developing entrepreneurial skills.

It is in keeping with the tradition of the Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées to have innovated in this way, for, with an engineer like Dupuit, in the nineteenth century, this school was in the van of mathematical economics. The French tradition in economics is an engineering tradition, and Dupuit's publications in the mid-nineteenth century applied to the analysis of returns to public utilities, for instance, or to the effect of tolls on highway transport, which are all very relevant

today. If engineering and economics cross-fertilised in the nineteenth century, it is hardly surprising that international business management should recombine the common DNA with engineering in the twentieth.

In conclusion, two points must be stressed. Firstly, the need to give an international slant in higher education to training in all disciplines, be they sciences, engineering, social sciences or management. We live and we compete in a world economy and within a European Economic Community, which will be a single market by 1992. We have therefore to learn to operate efficiently in a multinational and multilingual context. Europe should perhaps be seen as a glorified Switzerland, in which everyone is trilingual. What is in effect a necessity should also be seen as an opportunity, because it is very gratifying to be able to draw on the cultural heritage of more than one country and more than one language.

Secondly, given this situation, we need to design our curricula in such a way that any degree, not just a languages degree, is prepared in one or two universities abroad, so as to give an outward bound attitude that is such a distinctive feature of the English abroad, and which can no longer be limited just to them. Continental Europeans are becoming more outward bound and outward looking. It is often said that the British and Americans are still much too parochially confined to one language, which is becoming increasingly detrimental to the English-speaking countries. The growing American trade deficits are not just a question of the dollar but result from the fact that Americans do not know how to operate in any language other than English. Business firms are becoming increasingly aware of the need to have staff capable of operating efficiently in other countries, cultures and languages. It is up to language departments to collaborate with departments of engineering or management in the design and development of curricula aimed at training graduates able to operate in different countries and languages. This can best be done through the network system by operating in agreement with similar institutions abroad in other countries, by organising split-shift staff and exchanging staff and students.

REFERENCES

Harris, D. and Tallon, D. (1987) *Le Contrat aujourd'hui: Comparaisons franco-anglaises*, Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, Paris.

Lisle, E. (1985) Validation in the Social Sciences by International Comparison, in L. Hantrais, S. Mangen and M. O'Brien, *Doing Cross-National Research I*, AMLC, Birmingham, 11-28.

Russo, C. (1985) A Multidimensional Approach to International Training, *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 10 (1), 73-6.

International Programmes in German Higher Education

Bernd Wächter

Languages Department, University of Kassel

My acquaintance with the subject of this paper stems from my work as an organiser of study abroad programmes, at the University of Kassel in West Germany, and from research I conducted on behalf of the European Commission on the foreign language preparation and socio-cultural orientation of student participants in the ERASMUS and COMETT programmes.

In line with the general philosophy of this collection of papers, the word 'international' is used to refer to aspects of degree courses at higher education institutions which increase the graduate's employment prospects both in internationally oriented areas of the home labour market and in foreign labour markets. Unless stated otherwise, a 'programme' is defined as a degree course in a tertiary institution at the undergraduate or postgraduate level.

The following summary is certainly not comprehensive. Other characteristics than those used here to identify the international quality of a programme are conceivable. Of the following four categories, only the last will be dealt with in any detail:

1. Some programmes which would not appear at first sight to belong to our field of inquiry are international simply because they are good. An MBA degree from one of the top American universities is a qualification which makes for excellent career prospects almost everywhere.
   While Germans themselves, in the past, have been quite critical of the general standards in German higher education, by and large, the quality of courses in tertiary institutions of the Federal Republic can compare with that of other industrialised nations. In some areas, particularly in engineering, a German qualification stands in high international esteem. The award of two Nobel Prizes in recent years to German researchers indicates that Germany is catching up in the natural sciences, too;

2. Internationality can obviously also be attained by the integration of foreign language components into university programmes. The command of a foreign language as such is, with very few exceptions, not likely to increase international career prospects. The type of programme in question must be of the 'foreign language plus' sort. While the foreign language part of the overall curriculum should be substantial, the other subject(s) should make up at least fifty per cent of the study load.
   Such programmes are a common feature in British higher education, be they of the European studies type (based on the study of politics, history, geography or business studies/economics) or such revolutionary combinations as chemistry and German. To a great extent, Germany has resisted such creative fervour quite stoically. In non-foreign language programmes, foreign language components are unlikely to occur. If they are present, as is often the case in business studies, they seldom form a substantial part of the overall curriculum. Foreign language programmes, on the other hand, are mostly of the old philological type, i.e. they concentrate on literature and language. There are a few exceptions. Six years ago, my own university introduced a programme which combines modern languages (including the study of the history, society and political situation of the target country) with business studies or economics. While, in this case, the initiative came from the linguists, a programme in comparative law at the University of Passau has integrated considerable components of general and specific purpose-related foreign language study. New postgraduate courses of study in applied languages are also becoming increasingly common. While they are not of the 'foreign language plus' variety, together with the first qualification in another academic field, they produce a competence which could be called international;

3. An internationally valuable qualification is also provided by programmes with a compulsory traineeship period abroad. While, particularly in business studies and engineering, a number of programmes entail a compulsory period of practical experience, I know of very few examples where there is a compulsory traineeship period abroad;

4. The most common way of internationalising higher education in Germany is to make provision for extended periods of study abroad. In principle, it has always been possible for German students to interrupt their studies at the home university for a semester or two

abroad However, this often involved problems of accreditation and an extension of the overall time spent at university. For most students there were also financial problems. It was generally believed that these constraints were responsible for the much lamented phenomenon of *Auslandsmüdigkeit* on the part of German students. The obvious answer to this challenge was the integration of study abroad components into existing programmes. In order to secure accreditation, institutions sought and eventually found foreign exchange universities which guaranteed the provision of the programme of courses needed. Increasingly, German exchange organisations, such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), but also the European Commission, have begun to fund students on integrated study abroad programmes. In most cases, such schemes are reciprocal, i.e. the cooperating institutions act both in a sending and receiving capacity.

In some programmes, such possibilities as outlined above exist only as an option. In others, a study abroad component of between six months and a full academic year is compulsory. Recently, more ambitious partners in such cooperative ventures have moved a step ahead and attempted to achieve partial curricular harmonisation of their respective periods of study abroad, or indeed, worked towards a partial integration of the degree programmes in both institutions. In some cases, this has led to double qualifications, where, after successful completion of the overall programme, the students are awarded the respective degrees of both the home and the host institution. In very rare cases, genuine bi- or tri-national programmes have been developed, with full curricular integration and the award of a double degree.

In order to discuss the merits and problems inherent in cooperative ventures of the last two types, I should like to take a closer look at one model of each kind.

Model I: *European Business Administration (Middlesex Polytechnic, Fachhochschule Reutlingen, Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Reims and Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Madrid)*

The four institutions operate a total of six fully integrated, bi-lateral four-year programmes in business studies. On each programme, two years are studied at the home institution, the remaining two years abroad. Two traineeship periods, at least one of which must be spent abroad, also

form part of the course of study. With minor modifications, the programmes are absolutely identical in terms of content and examinations. In all institutions, the students study in mixed nationality groups, implying that the first two years are not necessarily spent in the country of origin. There is hardly any foreign language tuition. After successful completion of the programme, the students are awarded the degrees of both institutions.

Needless to say, graduates from this programme have excellent career prospects. This course of study is every programme designer's dream. However, the partner universities involved had to overcome substantial difficulties before attaining their goal, and it seems unlikely that experiments of this kind can be repeated successfully very often.

Being able to develop the programme almost from scratch, the cooperating institutions did not have the problem of harmonising existing programme structures, which is sometimes near to impossible. Moreover, there was the great advantage of being able to work within the limits of one common subject area. Finally, there are, for obvious reasons, no problems of accreditation. Yet, the obstacles outweighed the advantages. It took some very courageous and persevering academics to overcome them.

Firstly, there were technical and legal problems. The higher education systems of the four countries are, in many respects, quite different in structure. Among other things, Reutlingen had to change to the British three-terms-a-year rhythm. The Baden-Württemberg law controlling admission to *Fachhochschulen* had to be altered. The host institution in Rheims, one of the highly esteemed French *grandes écoles*, would not accept students without the *Abitur* (upper secondary school leaving certificate). Normally, *Fachhochschulen* must also accept students without this qualification. Finally, Reutlingen had to convince the Baden-Württemberg Department of Education to award a German degree based on a programme half of which was to be studied abroad. In Germany, several types of degrees are awarded by the state and not by the university itself.

Secondly, new staff were necessary. Again, the Department of Education was astonishingly cooperative.

Thirdly, once the programme had been started, it turned out to be exceptionally work intensive for those running it. The subject matter to be taught has to be agreed continually by all four partners. Similarly, examination papers have to be worked out together. Never is a paper set by only one institution. An absolute minimum of three coordination conferences per year is necessary merely to settle the more far-reaching

decisions. The staff of the four universities are constantly in a plane or on the telephone; they work the longest hours of all their colleagues.

Fourthly, the success of the programme depends very much on high entrance requirements and severe competition for admission. Since the programme has virtually no foreign language component, all students have to be competent in the language of the target country by the time they apply. Reutlingen has no problem in finding the eighty students admitted every year among the 2,000 applications received on average. However, it is doubtful whether the pool of adequately qualified applicants in Germany would be large enough if, instead of a few, there were a few dozen programmes of this kind.

Model II: *The Tri-national Integrated European Studies (TIES) Project (University of Hull, Université d'Angers, Universität Osnabrück)*

TIES is an attempt by these three universities to harmonise existing four-year programmes of the 'foreign language plus' variety. The *langues étrangères appliquées* programme in Angers adds components of economics/business studies and law to the study of foreign languages. Hull operates a European studies course drawing on a range of subjects such as history, politics, political economy, economics, geography, law and literature. The Osnabrück curriculum is fairly traditional, emphasising the study of literature and language. After three years at the home institution, students transfer to one of the partner universities. Upon successful completion of the fourth year abroad, they receive the four-year degrees of both institutions. A possible fifth year at the third university leads to an additional degree.

The feature common to all three degree courses is a foreign language component. In many other respects, the programmes are markedly different. The same is true of the fourth year curricula. In Hull and Osnabrück, emphasis is on politics, history and literature. The Angers curriculum stresses the study of economics/business studies and law. While all three institutions offer language courses to the foreign students, the Angers curriculum stresses specific purpose-related language work.

In comparison with the model discussed earlier, the differences are striking. The partner universities do not operate within one subject area only. Even the common foreign language components are, of course, not identical. Rather, they are mirror images of each other. The same is true of other 'common' subject areas: while French students are learning about, say, the history and political situation of Britain, their British

counterparts receive instruction on the corresponding French institutions.

Given these differences, the most to be attained is a partial harmonisation of programmes. This is clearly the purpose behind the respective fourth year curricula. They are based on components which are common to all three programmes but they also try to cater for the needs of individual programmes. Moreover, they reflect the limitations found in all three partner institutions.

From an academic point of view, the problem of accreditation is considerable. The fourth year abroad and the fourth year at home are by no means identical. However, one might regard this as a negligible quantity in the context of the overall four-year programme. The award of the home university's degree is therefore justifiable. It is questionable whether this also applies to the award of the host institution's degree. Subjects taught and examinations passed in the first three years are quite divergent. No doubt, the decision to give credit for the three previous years was taken in the students' best interest. The aim of the project is clearly to open up new employment opportunities in foreign labour markets. What is doubtful is whether the qualification obtained, in terms of knowledge and skills, is also of a double nature.

TIES is paradigmatic in yet another respect. As is of necessity typical of such ventures, the respective fourth year curricula are also the result of three limiting factors: the restriction on the range of subject areas represented at the foreign institution; limited access for the foreign students to some of the courses which are taught at the partner university; and the sheer impossibility of establishing a sufficient number of such extra courses, as ideally required by the foreign students, outside one's own department. From the point of view of Angers, it would no doubt have been desirable that the partners offer more law courses. Hull and Osnabrück, in line with the philosophy behind their own programmes, would have preferred a stronger emphasis on French literature in Angers. It is my own experience, gained in many negotiations dealing with such ventures, that the wishes of potential partner institutions can hardly ever be fulfilled. Either some of the subject areas they require are not represented at another university or they are covered by other departments. Even if the latter are willing to accept the foreign students in their classes, they will hardly ever be prepared or able to put on extra courses. This is quite understandable, because they are not the beneficiaries of the cooperation; they would be acting merely in a service capacity. With money becoming scarce in European higher education, central committees and administrations of universities will sometimes

approve projects of the TIES kind only if the department participating in the partnership agrees to satisfy any demand for new courses out of its own resources. It is not by coincidence, that an Angers paper announcing the project underlines "*que le projet ne demande pas de création de cours nouveaux à Angers pour les étudiants de Hull et Osnabrück qui suivent des cours déjà existants*".

My sceptical analysis of TIES is not meant as a criticism of the institutions involved. TIES was chosen because it illustrates the structural problems inherent in almost any attempt to harmonise existing programme structures of the 'foreign language plus' sort.

The above analysis indicates a fundamental dilemma. The harmonisation of existing programme structures is often a task equivalent to squaring the circle. The clear-cut solution of Model I requires either new staff or, alternatively, the closing down of existing programmes in order to secure the teaching capacity needed. There are no easy solutions. Yet, some improvements are perhaps feasible.

It is conceivable that some institutions might have the teaching capacity to establish fully integrated international programmes of shorter duration. With student numbers likely to decrease in Germany in future years, this might be a possibility for a few universities. The natural place for such short-term programmes of, for instance, two years' duration would be the postgraduate sector of higher education.

Attempts at partial integration or harmonisation do not provide a satisfactory answer. They are a worthwhile alternative only if they enhance the graduates' real qualifications. In most cases, this does not apply to the extent that would justify the award of a double degree. With the best of intentions, the ERASMUS programme of the EC has led many universities to adopt practices which are academically dubious. In my opinion, study abroad components should aim to complement the course structure of the home institution. Quite often, international programmes may result from a gap in provision. When establishing a new programme some years ago, my own university would have liked to integrate a law component. However, law is not represented as a full academic discipline in Kassel. In such cases, the provision of the 'missing' subject by a foreign partner university would seem to be the obvious solution. For quite a different programme, the partner institution might find its 'missing' subject at another university. Neither of the two programmes would lead to a double degree, but both of them would provide a sound international qualification.

II RESEARCHING THE CAREER PATHS OF GRADUATES

The Graduate Model

Philip A McGeevor

Department of Social Sciences, South Bank Polytechnic, London

Researching the career paths of graduates is usually considered to be primarily an empirical exercise concerning what jobs graduates do in the years after leaving college. However, without some wider consideration of how labour markets operate or what it is that employers are looking for from graduates, it is rather difficult to interpret the results of empirical enquiry. Thus the 'Graduate Model' referred to in the title is a way of conceptualising how different degree courses relate to the labour market. The model has one axiom and two dimensions. The axiom is that all graduates, by virtue of their education, possess some general skills and knowledge which are of value in employment. The two dimensions are the extent to which the course gives the graduate a specific and specialised skill that is relevant to employment and the extent to which the course equips the person for a particular occupation. The combination of these two dimensions was used to produce the four-fold classification shown in Table 1. While recognising that the actual allocation of courses in this table is both provisional and contestable, nevertheless it has been found useful in analysing our data. We also recognise that both dimensions are to some extent context dependent. Thus a degree in ancient Sanskrit becomes a highly specific vocational skill if the graduate is going to teach it or be employed as an archivist in the British Museum. Similarly, in the UK architecture is considered to have one occupational outcome, though in other parts of Europe it is seen as a useful general education.

In the Generalist grouping the subject of the degree is not related to any particular occupational outcome, and the graduate has general rather than specific skills. Such a degree may have a wide value across a large part of the labour market but for the graduate who possesses it the process of seeking, obtaining and becoming competent in a job has only just begun with graduation.

Table 1 *Degree Courses and Employment: The Graduate Model*

I	*The Generalist* Possesses general work-related skills and knowledge	Arts and Humanities English Literature Geography Communication Studies Social Studies Interfaculty Studies
II	*The Generalist Plus* Possesses general and specialist work-related skills and knowledge	Modern Languages Economics Mathematics Science Applied Chemistry Applied Biology Computer Science Environmental Science Fine Art
III	*The Occupational Generalist* Possesses general and specialist work-related skills and knowledge and an indentifiable area of application	Business Studies Environmental Planning Hotel and Catering Admin. Textile and Fashion Design 3D Design
IV	*The Occupational Specialist* Possesses general and specialist work-related skills and knowledge and a specific occupational role	Librarianship Accountancy Law Psychology Urban Estate Management Civil Engineering Electrical Engineering Production Engineering Pharmacy Nursing Graphics Design

Source: Brennan and McGeevor (1988)

The Generalist Plus grouping is, as it sounds, like the Generalist, but with the Plus being made up of some specialised skill which the graduate may hope to utilise in employment. The skill is not usually tied to, or used to regulate entry to, a particular job.

Graduates in the Occupational Generalist category have taken the first step to a particular job. The course will equip the student with a

range of competences that have occupational relevance to a reasonably wide range of employment. The degree is often composed of information from several different disciplines but is not usually used to control entry to a profession.

Occupational specialists have usually chosen their desired occupation prior to entry to higher education. Their degree implies at least a partial training for a job and will be part of the regulations for entry to such a job. After graduation there are likely to be clearly defined steps to full professional status.

The advantage of the Graduate Model is that it moves the argument a little away from the one-dimensional view that educational courses can be evaluated in terms of 'usefulness' according to the quantity of occupationally relevant skills acquired. The corollary of this view is a belief that there is such a thing as 'employability' which some courses possess in greater abundance than others. Indeed some unfortunate courses are considered to lack this vital ingredient altogether.

The weakness with the Graduate Model approach is that when presented in this reduced form it conceals certain social processes which perhaps need critical attention. Thus the model effectively says EDUCATION = SKILLS = JOBS and conceals the role that higher education has in controlling knowledge or that professions have in using education to limit access and competition. To the skills dimension could therefore be added dimensions of professionalisation and of monopoly.

One does not have to agree with Bernard Shaw's view that "all professions are conspiracies against the laity" to recognise that the process of professionalising occupations is not self-evidently a good thing. The process typically involves demanding high educational qualifications from new entrants (usually rather higher than that generally found amongst existing practitioners). The insecurities of the market place are replaced by guarantees of professional standards, but at a price. The professional gets increased social status and, usually, increased income. In the Graduate Model the Occupational Specialist grouping relates to professional organisation. It is not necessarily the case that there is a high demand for these graduates. Rather, it is that the demand is controlled or influenced by the professional bodies. In the Higher Education and the Labour Market survey (Brennan and McGeevor, 1988), pharmacy graduates do very well in the labour market. They find jobs quickly, use their skills and are comparatively well paid. This is a tribute to the strong links between the profession and the course. It should not be taken uncritically to mean that this is a better course than another which lacks this professional link.

The concept of monopoly refers to the extent to which the acquisition of particular knowledge can virtually only take place within higher education. Thus a knowledge of mathematics and pure science can, to all intents and purposes, only be acquired through higher education, and an employer who wishes to recruit someone with these skills is obliged to employ a graduate. Other types of knowledge which may be as complex may only be partially dependent on higher education or even totally outside its control.

These three dimensions — skills, professionalisation and monopoly — can be useful in considering how any one type of course is likely to fare in the labour market. If we take graduates from degree courses in modern languages, clearly they have a skill that will be extremely relevant, possibly indispensable, to a range of occupations (though the exact extent of the skill and its occupational relevance may vary considerably between different courses bearing the same name). The wide range of employment outcomes may be a disadvantage in terms of professional organisation. There is not (as far as I am aware) a single British Linguists Association — still less a Royal College of Polyglots — which guarantees certain standards and discipline its members for 'international malapropism'. The market relationship between the buyer and seller of this linguistic labour is relatively unrestricted by professional considerations. The result is probably lower pay and variable quality.

Nor does higher education have a monopoly on this knowledge. In a multicultural society there may be groups for whom bilingualism is a routine accomplishment rather than the product of higher education. Graduates will have to compete with these when looking for work which utilises their skill (though this suggests that courses that do have a virtual monopoly, such as in technical language, may be more favourably placed).

The addition of terms such as monopolisation and professionalisation increases the explanatory power of 'skills' in explaining the link between course and job. However, there remains a rather large portmanteau concept that badly needs unpacking. The 'generalised skills and abilities' that graduates are supposed to possess is the sort of hazy term that uncritical academics can hide behind and unquestioning employers can use to justify their prejudices. What are these generalised skills?

An important characteristic of our education system is that it tells us very little about what people *could* learn but a great deal about their speed of learning by formal means (Feinberg, 1983). Most people could acquire the appropriate competence for A-level work if taught by appropriate media and at an appropriate pace. That they do not may be

unfortunate for the individual, but actually serves a crucial purpose. By giving employers a measure of the ability to process formal information quickly the education system performs an important function in job allocation. Employers can reduce their training time and be confident that the personnel they employ in particular roles will have the required competence.

For example, the medical profession specifies the level of skill and knowledge required of a qualified doctor. It is in their professional interest that this level should be as high as possible, but even so a substantial proportion of the population would be able to reach this level of competence. However, far fewer would be able to reach this level in the time provided and with the teaching methods used. It is expensive to train medics, and the use of good A-level grades can help minimise these costs.

In order to enter higher education students have to demonstrate these abilities. They then receive three or more years of training to further develop them. The ability to understand, think and communicate quickly is the most valuable transferable skill that higher education can enhance, and as a result employers will often be more interested in the form than the content of the knowledge acquired.

It is sometimes claimed that higher education also enhances critical thinking and independent judgement. I have, for example, heard an employer of both graduates and non-graduates (in a technical capacity) say that on being told what to do the non-graduate asks 'How do I do that?' and the graduate says 'Why do I do that?' This view may overestimate the extent that independent thought is valued in undergraduates and underestimate the extent that critical thought is possessed by non-graduates. However, higher education does play a part in developing critical and independent thought. This can be seen in three different ways.

Firstly, an undergraduate course is supposed to give the student a broad grasp of the basic principles of a discipline. If understanding consists of locating a concept within this wider scheme, then a graduate may be more likely to enquire 'Why do we do that?' in order to make such a location. He or she should be able to use the concepts in new or different situations. The education should give the basis for independent judgement, though only within the area of specialised knowledge.

The second aspect concerns what is usually called the hidden curriculum. This refers to what the student learns through the way an institution functions. In higher education the values espoused and the teaching methods employed should emphasise and encourage originality and individual discrimination. Clearly the extent that this is so varies

between institutions and subject disciplines, but in comparison to other levels in the education system the hidden curriculum is supportive of these virtues.

The third sense in which higher education plays a part in sustaining critical thought is more complex. The starting point of this argument is that modern industrial societies have a shared culture that is uniquely different from that found in pre-industrial societies. The expression of this has occupied much social thought in the last two hundred years. The concepts used to describe the differences vary between theorists: with Weber (Gerth and Mills, 1948) it is rationality and disenchantment; with Gellner (1964) it is empiricism and materialism; for Gouldner (1979) it is a culture of critical discourse. The latter writer is interesting in this context because he is concerned with the role played by intellectuals (by which he means the product of higher education institutions) in modern society. The 'culture of critical discourse' (CCD) is a grammar of discourse, the central feature of which is the justification of argument through voluntary assent rather than appeal to authority. All statements can, in principle, be challenged. As Gouldner puts it:

> It is a culture of discourse in which there is nothing that speakers will on principle permanently refuse to discuss or make problematic; indeed, they are even willing to talk about the value of talk itself and its possible inferiority to silence or to practice. (Gouldner 1979, p. 28)

This culture is the basis of our science or technology as well as our political system and it is a prerequisite for many of the occupational positions within society. Higher education plays an important role in sustaining and widening it. This does not mean that attending college is necessary in order to acquire it. Like all cultures one can be socialised into it as a child and some children inherit it as 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979), which is a tremendous educational advantage as they are already speaking the language of higher education. However, even here higher education will enrich their culture. For many other children this will only be acquired through higher education. They are being socialised so as to be able to fulfil the requirements of particular jobs. It would seem that this level of cognitive and verbal skills is demanded by an increasing range of jobs. Higher education does not have a monopoly of them, nor indeed does it guarantee them, but many employers looking for these abilities will feel justified in reducing their recruitment search to graduates.

Higher education may also play a role in socialising students in other ways. It remains a means of social mobility for some people. It is the means by which the children of manual workers can become eligible for

middle class professional jobs. The culture of universities and polytechnics will introduce students to these behavioural patterns. The students may no longer feel obliged to lose their accents in the first term but they will almost certainly acquire some of the characteristics of a middle class lifestyle. This could be seen as anticipatory socialisation, for graduates will almost certainly end up in non-manual work. Anticipatory socialisation (Merton and Rossi, 1968) can take a quite extreme form in the case of Occupational Specialists. Becker (1977) believes that much of the learning that takes place in American medical school is learning how to behave like a doctor rather than learning the technical knowledge required of a doctor. Such knowledge is not trivial, it is an essential part of the occupational role. It also greatly increases your chance of getting a particular job if you can already act in the way appropriate for the incumbent.

The importance of the above discussion is that it enables us to address the question of what do graduates need for employment without attempting to say that all courses should be in the vocational or occupational specialist mould. Many courses are not and should not be vocational in this very limited sense, and trying to add on vocational content by the 'Word Processing for Philosophers' technique is not academically justifiable. Like Dr Johnson you may appreciate that it will not be done well but wonder why it is being done at all.

What then do graduates need for an international career? How can courses equip them for such a life? The checklist would include:

1. Experience of acquiring information independently, using it creatively, and communicating it effectively in writing and speech;

2. A pedagogy that encouraged critical and original thought and a philosophical approach which stressed the questioning and justification of concepts;

3. A syllabus that covers the broad area of knowledge of a discipline and the principles from which more specific knowledge is derived;

4. The availability of practitioners to act as role models;

5. Specific skills that will be required in order to carry out a job effectively.

Will a foreign language be one of the specific skills referred to in point five? It would seem likely, though it should be remembered that language degrees may also be effective in meeting the other four requirements.

The HELM survey is not well suited to studying the needs of an international career. Graduates working abroad are particularly difficult to contact. However, two years after graduation we did ask the question:

> In relation to job requirements, do you now feel that your degree course gave you sufficient opportunity to develop your skills in the following areas?

Among the options included in this question were oral communication, written communication, numeracy, computing and foreign language.

If we leave aside those who took a modern languages course (of whom ninety-eight per cent said their course *did* give sufficient opportunity), we have thirty per cent of the total sample saying that there was insufficient opportunity. This is a very high figure and perhaps much of it could be discounted as wishful thinking. However, it is the difference between courses that is most interesting. Perhaps one would expect forty-six per cent of hotel and catering graduates to wish for a second language; however this is surpassed by mechanical and production engineering (forty-nine per cent) and chemistry (forty-seven per cent). Not far behind is textile and fashion design (forty-two per cent), business studies (forty-one per cent) and electrical engineering (thirty-nine per cent). Thus even if one discounts twenty-five per cent of the responses as being the vague 'wouldn't it be nice to speak another language' type of answer there are still fifteen to twenty per cent of the graduates from these disciplines with a more substantial need for a foreign language.

REFERENCES

Becker, H.S. (1977) *Boys in White: Student Culture in Medical School*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, NJ.

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J. C. (1979) *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relationship to Culture*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Brennan, J. L. and McGeevor, P. A. (1988) *Graduates at Work: Degree Courses and the Labour Market*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.

Feinberg, W. (1983) *Understanding Education: Towards a Reconstruction of Educational Inquiry*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Gellner, E. (1964) *Thought and Changes*, Weidenfield and Nicholson, London.

Gerth, H. and Mills, C.W. (1948) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

Gouldner, A.W. (1979) *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*, Macmillan, London.

Merton, R.K. and Rossi, A.S. (1968) Contributions to the Theory of Reference Group Behaviour in *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Collier Macmillan, London.

Preparing for the International Environment: A Preliminary Survey of European Studies Graduates

Colin Mellors

School of European Studies, University of Bradford

One of the more positive consequences of the climate in which British higher education finds itself in the late 1980s is the greater interest that has developed in graduates as products of higher education. Until recently, in most institutions, the careers service and those committed volunteers who administer convocation or graduate associations were probably alone in attempting to keep in contact with groups of former students. The word 'alumni' was, until this decade at least, usually associated with the fund-raising activities of US colleges and universities and seemed to have little place in the institutions of higher education in Britain. Recently, however, the term has firmly entered the vocabulary of higher education in this country and not solely in connection with campaigns aimed at friend- and fund-raising. The experience of our alumni offers a considerable and largely untapped source of data against which to evaluate the 'relevance' of our courses, to review our curricula and to assess mid-career training needs. The latter is assuming greater importance, of course, as institutions have come to recognise their responsibilities to provide updating courses as part of their continuing education activities. What happens to graduates also provides valuable information for prospective and current students and careers advisers who help graduates make the transition from lecture room to workplace. The destinations and work experiences of former students are clearly relevant to *all* who design and teach courses in higher education.

In recent years, it has become increasingly common for academic departments to survey their graduates as a way of evaluating the career utility of their courses and, in so doing, to raise the profile of their departments both internally and externally. Such studies are a welcome complement to the annual Universities Statistical Record survey of graduates' destinations six months after the completion of their courses. The latter has, of course, received some criticism, especially from arts and social science faculties where a picture of graduates so soon after the completion of their courses is, at best, an uncertain guide to later career

destination and the application, if any, of degree skills. It is fitting that those who have pointed to the shortfalls of the USR survey in respect of their particular discipline should therefore put their efforts into assembling fuller longitudinal data about the careers and experiences of their former students. In fact, departments of modern languages have been particularly active in this respect, and a number of surveys of this kind have been undertaken. Naturally, some caution has to be exercised in interpreting the results, not least given the relatively small size of their population samples. Also the scope and content of the surveys vary considerably, and it is unwise to draw too many conclusions from comparing the results of different studies which may have adopted quite distinctive methodologies. However, these attempts to discover more about our graduates are to be welcomed and what follows draws upon the results of one such survey of the career destinations of European studies graduates from Bradford University first conducted in 1984-85 and updated in 1986.

The concept of European studies as a degree subject is relatively new. Its development over the last fifteen years has been rapid and has, of course, coincided with the strengthening of Britain's political and trading links with mainland Europe, both East and West. The importance of understanding and being able to operate in an international environment will, no doubt, be further reinforced as we approach the completion of the internal market in 1992. As Edmond Lisle correctly observed in his keynote address, it is important that higher education should take as one of its responsibilities the education of people who will need to live, work and trade in an international environment. This implies not just language proficiency but also an awareness of, and sympathy for, the norms and values of other societies. In essence, degree programmes in European studies — which have frequently grown out of modern language courses — link the study of language with that of the social sciences firmly placed in the context of modern Europe. Emphasis is given to the *practical* and *contemporary* context of courses of study. Most involve a period spent abroad in the country of the language being studied, although this period may be spent in different ways, continuing the study of the degree in a continental university, in a work placement or as a language assistant. Approximately twenty-four institutions offer degree courses in European studies and recruit over 900 students annually. These courses have some similarities with modern language courses and some dissimilarities. Among the similarities are: an A-level language requirement for prospective undergraduates, roughly comparable A-level scores and, as far as we are able to judge, similar job orientations after graduation. Among the differences are: the interdisciplinary/

multidisciplinary approaches involved in the courses, the extent of the social science content and the considerable emphasis in most courses on *language* as opposed to *literature* in the foreign language component. The courses seem to be especially attractive to students who wish to use a foreign language as a communicating skill rather than to study it for its own intrinsic value.

The European studies degree course at Bradford allows undergraduates to study one foreign language (French or German) and to major in one social science subject (economics, politics, geography, history or sociology), as well as following subsidiary courses in international relations, statistics, European management, etc. The approach taken to the foreign language stresses the importance of oral and written proficiency, and all undergraduates spend the third year of their course studying at a continental university in a country relevant to their chosen foreign language. Undergraduates who study German are given the additional choice of specialising in either Eastern or Western Europe and spending part of the year abroad in Eastern Europe. The first intake to the four-year course was in 1972. The first cohort of graduates completed their course in 1976 and, by the time of the latest survey, there had been a total of 230 graduates.

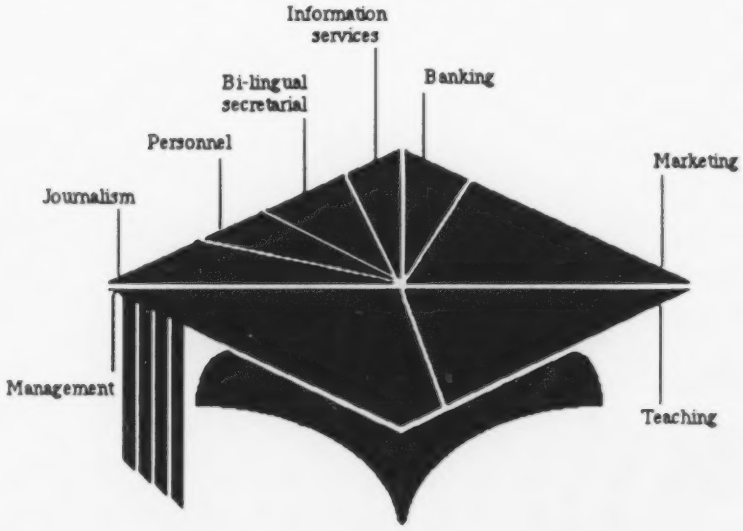
The survey was conducted via a short questionnaire sent to the last known parental or student address. Despite some re-directions as a result of new addresses provided by fellow graduates, it proved impossible to trace approximately twenty per cent of graduates. A similar number were traced but failed to complete the questionnaire. Altogether, 144 completed questionnaires were returned, representing sixty-three per cent of the target-group. Two-thirds of the graduates are female, and so far as it was possible to ascertain the responses were representative of the target group in terms of distribution by sex, class of degree, options studied and other variables.

The questionnaire concentrated on career destination after graduation; requirement for a foreign language in obtaining a job; use of language at work; other degree components used at work; additional qualifications obtained.

The broad distribution of Bradford's European studies graduates is depicted in the diagram below which categorises career destinations according to standard USR groups.

As might be expected from any survey of social science graduates, the largest worktype group is management. The word management, of course, can cover a range of quite different activities and graduates were asked to detail more precisely what their job entailed. The largest number fall into the classifications 'general administration' or

Diagram 1 *Distribution of Graduate Employment by Worktype*



'operational management', and among these graduates relatively little use was made of their foreign language skills. By contrast, nearly all of those working in the marketing area, the second largest group, made at least some use of their foreign language. Trade patterns obviously determine the languages that are used, and the extent of our trade with mainland Europe is reflected in the use made of particular European languages. In this respect the Bradford survey confirmed the results of other studies. German seems more valuable than French in terms of marketing work, and there is clear evidence of the increasing significance of Spanish in this field. Similar findings emerge from studies of employers' language needs (see, for example, Hagen, 1988). A number of graduates indicated that they had been required to learn 'new' foreign languages, and in this case Spanish ranked as the most common. It was also encouraging to discover that some of the marketing group had been able to make use of their specialist knowledge of the politics and economics of Eastern Europe. Another popular area is the financial sector. There are Bradford graduates in all the major clearing banks, a good number being located in the international divisions, as well as in the Bank of England.

Within the public sector, the most common career is teaching in schools, further and higher education. Of those in schools, all are employed as language teachers, with most offering their social science subject as a subsidiary specialism. The position is reversed for those teaching in further and higher education: the social science is their primary subject with their language skill being a means of working in their major discipline.

If we turn from job to employer category, then again the Bradford findings are consistent with those of other surveys. More than one-third of the graduates are employed in the public sector, primarily in education or the civil service. A similar sized group is employed by professional or commercial organisations, notably banks and publishing. Slightly less than twenty per cent are employed in the manufacturing sector. The size of this group appears small — certainly when compared with what one might expect if the graduates had been from a science-based course — but it is worth noting that among European studies graduates there are more employed by manufacturing industry than as teachers, and there are twice as many in manufacturing as there are civil servants.

One final point might be made about career destination. One of the Bradford staff involved in the survey is a geographer, and we therefore took the opportunity to look at 'destinations' in the geographical sense of the word. It is sometimes believed that one of the appeals to sixth-formers of a language-based degree course is the subsequent opportunity it might provide for travel, and we looked at how many graduates were based abroad and how many were required to travel as part of their work. For nearly half the respondents, European travel was part of their job, and a further sixteen per cent were based abroad (although not necessarily in Europe). Of those based in Britain it was disturbing (although not surprising) to discover that a mere eighteen per cent were located north of the Wash-Severn line, another indication of the superior job opportunities in the south-east.

As careers advisors continually tell undergraduates, a non-vocational degree course is not a passport to a particular job. Two-thirds of all job vacancies are for graduates of *any* discipline. Elsewhere in this collection, Philip McGeevor refers to some of the other, perhaps less quantifiable, aspects of the 'degree experience'. In most cases a degree is not a training for a specific job. However, the job market for our graduates and the needs of employers do, at the very least, merit our attention. Against this background, the survey considered three specific issues: whether a foreign language qualification was required by the employers of our graduates, the use that was actually being made of a

foreign language at work, and whether other aspects of the degree were used at work.

Two points are worthy of comment: the differences between French and German respondents and the fact that the number of graduates *using* their foreign language is greater than the number who were *required* to have a language skill. The latter finding confirms that of other surveys where a language skill appears to be viewed by many employers as a 'secondary skill'. In other words, graduates were recruited on the basis of their general abilities and were considered alongside graduates of different disciplines, but once in employment their language proficiency has been recognised as an additional skill and called into use. Overall two-thirds of the graduates in this survey have been able to make some use of their foreign language at work. However, a distinction has to be made between French and German: not only are those graduates with German more likely to 'require' their foreign language, but they have also been more likely to put their language to use than their counterparts who studied French. This fact reinforces the view of those who argue for the need to encourage more students, especially at school, to study the German language.

The survey also looked briefly at the extent to which other degree subjects were used at work. These responses are more difficult to quantify, although there was evidence that subjects like economics and politics were useful, if only in providing a background understanding of foreign countries with which a graduate might now be trading. One further point might be mentioned here: the Bradford degree is unusual in requiring all students to take a course in quantitative techniques and offering a second and fourth year option in statistical methods primarily, although not exclusively, for those taking economics. Although students have sometimes had difficulties with this course, a number of respondents took the opportunity to comment upon its career value, and it does seem important that we encourage the inclusion of statistical and computing skills in language-based courses.

A degree qualification, of course, does not mark the end of formal study, and over half the respondents had undertaken some kind of further external (i.e. not in-house) course or training. Nearly forty per cent had obtained a recognised professional qualification or degree, and, apart from a teacher-training qualification, the most popular was an MBA. Sometimes the training marked a distinctive career shift, for example legal training.

We were especially interested in how many graduates had taken up another foreign language for career purposes. A number had done so and, with the exception of Arabic and Punjabi, all were European

languages. Spanish was by far the most popular 'new' language. The explanation for the popularity of this language is, of course, to be found in the growing interest and trade with Southern Europe and Latin America. At present, the European studies course at Bradford does not include a Spanish option: it may be something to consider for the future.

The Bradford survey, which is now updated annually, has helped those who are responsible for running the European studies degree programme to become more aware of the career demands facing our graduates. Even the least vocational of courses can benefit from a better understanding of what happens to graduates in those subjects. The survey has helped us to identify the strengths of our existing course and how these might be broadened in the future. Recently, the University Association for Contemporary European studies decided to undertake a major survey of about 3,000 European studies graduates from sixteen colleges, polytechnics and universities in the UK. The survey, which is being coordinated at Bradford, will cover a larger range of issues than the survey described here, and by building upon our existing knowledge it should help us to understand still better how we might strengthen the links between education and work.

REFERENCE

Hagen, S. (ed.) (1988) *Language in British Business: An Analysis of Current Needs*, Newcastle upon Tyne Products Ltd and CILT, Newcastle and London.

Language Skills and the Real Life Tasks Performed by Language Graduates

Dennis E Ager

Department of Modern Languages, Aston University, Birmingham

The growing interest in the relationship between higher education and the needs of the labour market, particularly in the area of international trade, has prompted a number of follow-up studies of the careers pursued by language graduates. From their results a fairly clear picture is emerging of the ways in which the skills acquired by undergraduates match the real life tasks performed in employment contexts.

Building on earlier work carried out in the Department of Modern Languages at Aston and with support from the British Academy, further sampling of Aston graduates was combined with a survey of graduates in French from the University of Reading. In addition to a questionnaire survey, the second Aston study included twenty-five in-depth interviews with languages graduates working in industry and commerce. The purpose in this paper is firstly to summarise the survey results very briefly and then to present an analysis of the information derived from the interviews in order to draw out pointers for syllabus designers.

The questionnaire survey sample brought responses from 220 Aston and Reading languages graduates from a total population of 990. Although the replies do not exactly match the subject mix of the undergraduate courses followed or the first destinations notified for the 990, by and large they illustrate the general conclusions which are succinctly outlined by Harris (1989) and which emerge from other papers in this collection as well as previous studies.

The new survey demonstrates that languages are both useful and used, although in many cases they need to be combined with other skills to build a successful career. Following the same line of argument, a degree in language or literature prepares the graduate for many occupations but does not provide a training for any single career, even that of translator. As Philip McGeevor shows in his paper, languages graduates do not possess an occupational qualification as such, since very few will become professional linguists, but, other things being equal, their language skill is an important bonus. As concomitants of the two previous points, further training or the acquisition of further knowledge

is necessary after graduation: in the case of careers in teaching, some aspects of management and journalism, postgraduate training is a prerequisite for the job, while in-service training is required for accountancy and for careers in industry, banking and retailing.

Harris suggests that many languages graduates work abroad for a short time after graduation, usually teaching English as a foreign language. In the case of the Aston and Reading samples, 'many' would seem to be an overstatement, but as a group language graduates do seem more likely to seek employment abroad than other categories of graduates.

The majority of languages graduates will not use their languages in their first job, although most do so within about five years. Amongst the language tasks performed by graduates, which relate to their degree courses, translation is commonly mentioned, but there are many other skills which are not necessarily practised by undergraduates. In order of importance the ten skills most often quoted were: social survival, translation, writing business letters, interpreting, discourse at social functions, teaching, reading reports, reading telexes, addressing small meetings and switching between formal and informal speaking tasks. The other skills acquired on language courses include those developed by most arts graduates: organisation, self-confidence, judgement, analytical and presentation skills.

Finally, the survey confirmed that language graduates tend to follow a wide variety of careers, ranging from teaching to finance, sales, marketing, insurance, journalism, computing, management services, the civil service and information handling (translation, abstracting, librarianship).

The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to provide fuller and more accurate data on the nature of language use by graduates. The sample of twenty-five graduates who were interviewed was selected on the basis of types of employment where it was felt that little is known about the language skills used. Only graduates who were using foreign languages in management and supporting occupations were interviewed, and they were selected to give a range of languages and of types of language use, although French and working locations in France predominate. The graduates interviewed were at a point between three and seven years from graduation.

The jobs held, the type of employer and their location include: international marketing for a television company in London, involving commissioning, planning, producing and marketing written support material for videos for English language teaching overseas; accountant in a large hotel in Paris; secretary/receptionist for an international lawyer

in Paris; buyer for a manufacturer of photocopiers and similar goods in Lille; export accounts manager for a food packaging manufacturer in Luxembourg; export marketing assistant for an electronic office equipment manufacturer in South Wales; marketing manager for a carpet manufacturer in the West Midlands; management consultant; self-employed travel agent.

The following analysis covers interpersonal skills, particularly in terms of work patterns and communicative network characteristics, communicative skills, with special reference to message functions, and the four language skills, with emphasis on the message types encountered.

Most of the graduates worked in communication situations requiring small group interaction, typically that of a sales team with a work unit of eight people within an open-plan office. The group had a coherent identity and regarded itself as a special sub-unit. The work/message channels (i.e. means by which orders entered the group) included telephone, electronic mail, correspondence, telex and the order books of representatives. Interaction/message channels included spoken and face-to-face communication and written messages; there was much intra- and intergroup spoken interaction ('constant meetings').

In smaller offices the level and type of spoken interaction depended on the nature of the work: in the most extreme case, in a translation office, social or even work-related spoken interaction was strongly discouraged, with translators/checkers seated before screens intent on individual tasks. The work demanded absolute accuracy and concentration, and as the wordprocessors used were not sophisticated enough to assist in some mundane tasks such as word counting, lexical data-base provision, incorporation of non-textual material (charts and graphs) or split-screen working, translators/checkers spent much time on comparatively routine tasks of this type.

In nearly all cases interpersonal interaction was on an informal basis, although this could be skin-deep; one graduate remarked that the boss 'did not pull his punches', and open criticism of the work of colleagues was widespread, although not resented. One organisation was working towards an evaluation and performance assessment system, with detailed interview reports and career progression evaluations, and it seemed likely that such personnel methods would be introduced in other situations too. In small offices hierarchies were more strongly identified. Some graduates were working mainly by themselves: sales representatives operating across Europe, self-employed tour operators; researchers and writers; management consultants.

The general conclusions drawn from an analysis of the typical work situations and communicative networks in which graduates operated showed that there was a need to understand and be functional within both hierarchical and tightly structured situations and also to range more freely across them, in the latter case while retaining an awareness of the career progression modalities of the organisation. The interpersonal skills used included those required for operating professionally within small groups of five to ten people, of whom one would be the section or group leader, one (or two) a support person/secretary, and others would be operatives on an equal level; presentation skills to ensure full understanding of the activity conducted; and awareness of the value of multiplex links across both organisation and communication networks.

Of the six communicative functions identified by Jakobson (cf. Saville-Troike, 1982,) the most important for the interviewees were the 'directive' or 'vocative', involving persuasive and imperative language uses, the 'denotative', implying a referential and informative use, and the 'metalinguistic' (commenting upon the language used). In addition, and particularly for those whose work was mainly conducted by telephone, the 'phatic' function played a large part: maintaining communication at a distance is not easy to do, and many graduates found it essential to understand the art of ensuring they were not cut off. The 'poetic' or 'aesthetic' was important for those concerned with public relations or marketing; but the 'expressive' or 'creative', conveying feelings or emotions, was not generally relevant.

It is evident that, particularly for those in sales and marketing activities, persuading others to agree and to accept proposals is fundamental. Graduates in managerial functions needed to persuade, but also sometimes to act more imperatively: 'to shout a bit', as one graduate put it, to establish that one did not intend to be dominated in the tensions of the workplace. One special aspect of language use in the persuasive function was the growing awareness of the image and identity of particular firms and other organisations. This was exemplified in one organisation which had recently started an in-house newspaper, the first five issues of which had had to be written by the 'Communications' branch of the Human Resources (Personnel) section.

Most of the graduates in the interview sample, at the beginning of their working life, were processing information, usually in order to provide a basis for action, whether by themselves or others. Many were extracting information from written sources, summarising, analysing or converting it to a different format, and then using it to sell, to prepare documents for others, or to advise. The use of informative text, of language describing facts or referring to reality, was characteristic of

this type of process, and knowledge of the referential function of text was therefore significant. Particular examples of the use of the referential function were quoted by those who were required to make regular presentations to colleagues or superiors on special projects, problems or proposals. These expositions were invariably supported by facts and figures, often in the form of charts, graphs or tables, which meant that graduates had to be able to make a convincing case, to support arguments with relevant facts, to draw conclusions, to respond to questions and to defend a point of view. In addition the analytical skills were needed for disentangling relevant facts from 'fiction', whether the advertising man's blurb or the irrelevant padding of the magazine writer.

Individual graduates showed quite different patterns of usage of the four basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Reading for gist (skimming) and reading for content (decoding) were, however, the main reading strategies employed in many work situations. It was particularly important to be able to handle figures easily and to understand statistical information presented in tables, charts and graphs. A high level of skimming ability was said to be crucial in many jobs, particularly those with a marketing focus, in which awareness of the market itself and of competitors' status and activities was fundamental: in those circumstances speed in obtaining relevant information was important. Telexes were now often typed direct by principals, rather than going via secretaries, so the formatting of information was less patterned than in commercial correspondence; spelling was poor, abbreviations were often used, a more direct and friendly tone was evident, and, particularly in French, skill on the part of the reader in re-establishing sense when most grammatical form words were omitted was a prerequisite for full comprehension. Much of this information was also now obtained from electronic data bases, and skills in developing search strategies for accessing these with minimum time and cost were becoming significant.

Writing rarely required lengthy text in the foreign language, and many graduates wrote mainly in English using foreign language sources. Their presentation skills in written English were therefore crucial to success. When using the foreign language, however, the prime requirement was the construction of a letter in an appropriate style, increasingly with telex and screen-based communication as instruments. Internal communication (within the organisation), in the form of notes to colleagues, memos and brief action texts, such as accurate minutes of meetings, was also common.

Speaking skills were much used, both in face-to-face communication and particularly over the telephone, where the lack of non-verbal clues

means that ability to rephrase, to structure an interchange and to maintain cordiality and even sometimes contact was helpful. Many graduates used speaking skills for social survival while living in a foreign country. The same skills were employed in social functions, in meeting clients for example. In these meetings the ability to converse knowledgeably on matters of general importance in the relevant society — particularly politics, culture, family life and sport — was essential. Knowledge of conversational structure, of exposition and argument, the ability to think on one's feet and to adapt and develop material were also of importance, particularly to those graduates involved in marketing, selling or purchasing.

Generally the written message types involved were brief and factual; a high level of language skill was needed to decode messages in the shortest time span and to process and transform messages, often from one language to another. From the evidence of the interviews, the language skills needed were of a high order, even though in many cases, particularly for those based in the UK, they represented a small proportion of the graduate's use of his/her time; indeed in many cases it seemed that the higher the degree of competence and proficiency of the graduates, the less time they 'wasted' on trying to understand or to express themselves and the more efficiently they therefore conducted the business. Many graduates noted that they had been able to absorb technical material and the associated vocabulary with comparative ease, lending support to the notion that it is cheaper and more effective to train a linguist in the technical skills required for comprehension than to train an engineer or manager to a sufficiently high level of foreign language competence to be able even to receive a message accurately.

Many graduates commented during the interviews on two aspects of their business experience: the value to them of the non-language matters dealt with in their courses and the value of having a high level of communicative ability. It was clear that establishing contact with native speakers of foreign languages is not merely a matter of possessing language skills; one must have something to say and be able to comprehend the import of what is being said. In many areas the matter of discourse is the business in hand: the negotiation, the quality and price of goods, the document being translated, the question to which an answer is sought. But direct contact with people is not limited to such matters, and most graduates commented on the need to understand the political, social, and economic fabric of the country concerned and the daily concerns and attitudes of its citizens. Matters such as local customs and business practice were also best understood against a background knowledge of the wider social environment, and success in communication was far

easier to achieve when the graduate could empathise with the relevant society, while recognising that he/she necessarily remained external to it.

It also became clear that the graduates interviewed felt that the technical vocabulary of any specialist area with which they were concerned did not present any great problems and that they had fewer problems in specialist communication than those with expert technical knowledge who had tried to acquire some degree of language facility. One marketing specialist for metal laminates used in food packaging simply brought over a technical expert when the discussion became too detailed and acted as his interpreter. Others had acquired legal, financial or computing knowledge as necessary. All stressed the need to possess communication skills at a high level, and most pointed out that a lesser level led quickly to impatience and frustration. The message they gave was that language expertise reduced delay and enabled the task to be completed more quickly and more effectively.

The accounts given by the graduates interviewed, in combination with the questionnaire-based survey, suggest a number of ways in which language courses might be adapted to meet the needs of graduates working in international contexts. An introduction to certain message types — in particular business letters and telex — could be associated with a general presentation of the business environment and some understanding of basic business processes. Negotiation and other interpersonal skills could be developed through role play, group work and project-based exercises, with case-study methods and student presentations of reports and proposals. An understanding of language variety as determined by subject matter (financial, scientific and technical usage), by interaction (in the formal/informal contrast), by channel (writing and speech, particularly telephone speech) and by purpose (persuasive versus informative language) could be developed, perhaps by occasionally bringing in those graduates who are currently operating in the business environment as part of the teaching team. But above all the employment context requires high standards of expertise in the language skills themselves, associated with a good understanding of the relevant society and its political economic, social and cultural concerns.

REFERENCES

Ager, D.E. (1988) *The Usefulness of Language Skills Acquired in Higher Education*, Aston University, Birmingham.

Harris, J. (forthcoming 1989) Modern Languages Careers, entry in CVCP, *University Entrance*, CVCP, London.

Saville-Troike, M. (1982) *The Ethnography of Communication*, Blackwell, Oxford.

III EMPLOYMENT IN INTERNATIONAL SETTINGS

Employment Opportunities for Graduates within Europe

Tony Raban

Cambridge University Careers Service

The starting point for this paper is the question of what opportunities exist at the moment, or perhaps are likely to exist in the near future, for recent graduates from UK institutions of higher education to enter employment in continental Europe fairly soon after graduating. It is concerned particularly with the other member states of the European Community because there are legal rights to work in the EC member states which do not apply elsewhere. However, some of the points made are just as relevant to non-EC member states, although others are very specific to the Community.

The main focus is on private sector employment, particularly in industry and commerce because there are considerable difficulties for foreign nationals in working in some areas of public sector employment in countries other than their own. However teaching, which is perhaps an important area, at least for modern languages graduates, is touched on and brief mention is made of international organisations, especially the Community institutions themselves. Rather than giving a detailed catalogue of employers and employment areas, a more general picture is provided of what the labour market might be like for British graduates in an attempt to try and identify some of the factors which either promote or inhibit mobility. (There are some quite serious inhibitions even within the European Community.) Some of the strategies which people can adopt if they are looking for jobs in other Community countries are also outlined.

Within the context of the Single European Act, the Peoples' Europe of 1992, much is being said about the question of the right to work: one of the important rights which citizens of European Community member states have is the right to work in other member states than their own. It is a right to work and not a right to reside, which is an important

distinction. Nobody has the right to go and reside in another European Community country unless they actually have a job there or are practising a profession as a self-employed professional or have worked there and retire there. They cannot decide that they would rather live in France than the UK, because it is a nicer place or the food or wine is better, but if they have a job there, then they have a right to go and take that job, unless it can be proved they are some sort of danger to public order.

The two major exceptions, at the moment, are Spain and Portugal which will not have labour market mobility until 1 January 1993. This means that no EC national has a right to work in Spain or Portugal until then, and equally the Spanish and the Portuguese have no right to work elsewhere. They may be given work permits to do so, but they have to apply for them like anybody else, and equally the British must have work permits for Spain or Portugal.

It is still perfectly legal for employers to require a local qualification. The legal principle of the Community is that nobody should be discriminated against when they apply for a job, because they are not a national of the country where they are trying to work, unless the interests of the State are involved which explains the exception for public sector employment.

An employer can, however, still quite legitimately require that his employee has an accepted local qualification. For example, a British graduate with a Postgraduate Certificate of Education is a qualified teacher in UK terms but could not go to France and demand to be allowed to be employed as a qualified teacher because he or she would not have a French teaching qualification. It is quite legitimate to require a local teaching or other qualification for a particular job. This is another area in which the Community is trying to bring about change through harmonisation legislation. Certain professions have already been harmonised, mostly the medical professions. This means that anybody who has a recognised professional qualification in any of the fields covered by the harmonisation legislation from one country has to be recognised as having an acceptable professional qualification in all the other countries. Work is being done on architecture at the moment, and law and engineering are being considered. In many areas local qualifications are still demanded. Employers can also insist on an adequate knowledge of the local language or the local political or social circumstances before they will accept an applicant for a job. Being a Common Market citizen does not therefore entail an absolute right to apply for any job.

There is a much more important inhibiting factor which complicates the situation for graduates: the totally different attitude of most continental European countries, whether they are Community member states or not, to the relevance of degree subjects. In another paper, Philip McGeevor describes the generalist skills which graduates possess. In statistical terms careers advisers would say that approximately a third, or more than a third now, of the jobs handled by the Central Services Unit for Graduate Careers Services are open to graduates of any discipline. Approximately a third are restricted to people from a range of subjects, for example any numerate discipline or any scientific discipline. Only about a third are limited to a specific discipline. This is difficult for continentals to understand. For them a degree is a specific qualification to do a specific job. Modern languages graduates, particularly of the traditional sort, are qualified to teach, or to be an interpreter or a translator, but not to do anything else. The idea of modern languages graduates or arts graduates going into industry, commerce, banking, public sector administration is alien to almost all the Common Market cultures. The fact that British graduates do not have degrees which are considered in continental terms as 'relevant' presents enormous problems for British graduates who are trying to work abroad. They are expected to have scientific or technical degrees for scientific and technical jobs; business studies, economics or possibly law degrees, for commercial jobs. Otherwise most continental employers are not very interested in them.

There is another factor which is sometimes a problem for British graduates trying to get jobs on the continent: their age. Continentals tend to use the length of time taken to achieve a qualification as a yardstick to measure its level. The French in particular talk of *bac plus trois*, *bac plus cinq*. In other words the level of qualification is equal to the number of years spent studying beyond the *baccalauréat*, which is not very meaningful when translated into English terms. The British have to explain that the system is different, because it is more selective and more intensive, and the staff-student ratios are better. Maybe they have a less broad base of secondary education, but in terms of their specialist field, they are probably not very different. Sometimes the problem can simply be resolved by growing older and perhaps gaining some relevant experience, which makes British graduates more employable on the continent.

There may also be legal difficulties, in the sense that, for example, the Germans and the Dutch, particularly, equate what would be their normal university level qualification, what might in Britain be referred to perhaps as a first degree qualification, with, in British terms, a masters

degree. They will not recognise bachelors degrees. The formal qualification for some jobs will therefore be set, in British terms, at the masters and not the bachelors level. This is one of the reasons why, particularly for research and development, PhDs are much more saleable than first degree graduates.

What sort of jobs are open to new graduates, and what are the other factors that are operating in the labour market? There are two major reasons why we are beginning to get a pattern of cross-national boundary recruitment. One is the need for people who have cross-national understanding, the other is simply because of shortages. There is a growing need in all countries for people who understand the cultures, way of life and way of doing business of other countries. It is not simply a mechanical ability to understand a language or speak a language which matters, but rather an understanding of the way in which jobs are done in other cultures. In the UK more and more companies are wanting people who have an understanding of continental cultures. There has been a marked change since Britain joined the Community. In pre-Community days, our trade links were much more with the English speaking world. Our trade balances are now much more heavily weighted towards the Common Market, and therefore more and more companies want people who have an understanding of continental cultures, including continental languages. Also a number of continental employers have a need for British people who can give them an understanding of British culture for when they are doing business in this country. It is extremely important to stress that it is this broader cultural and professional understanding and not just a pure mechanical linguistic knowledge that matters.

British employers are increasingly beginning to recruit graduates who will at some stage need their language and international skills and may well work on the continent, but typically that is not a first job. Generally they are recruited to be trained and to work first of all in this country. Mobility or the ability to go abroad tends to come perhaps two or three years after graduation. One strategy graduates can adopt is to look for appropriate experience in this country or to get an appropriate professional qualification to add to their degree, for example accountancy or a legal qualification. This is one way of overcoming the problem if they are what continentals would regard as non-relevant graduates. Under the rules of the game in Anglo-Saxon culture, they can acquire relevant training and experience. Continental employers may then be perfectly happy to recruit them because they are not worried about whether they read modern languages or European studies or history or philosophy at university, rather than engineering or business

studies. Employers are, however, interested in the professional working experience and skills they have.

The other element or factor, which is operating apart from this need for people with an international culture is the simple supply and demand situation in the graduate labour market. There are evident shortages of some sorts of graduates certainly throughout most of Northern Europe and even in parts of Southern Europe. On the whole Southern Europe has more problems of overproduction of graduates, even in disciplines like engineering, than Northern Europe. In all countries in Northern Europe, just as in the UK, there is a shortage of electronics engineers and computer scientists. More good business studies graduates would be welcome. Recently Philips, for example, conducted a spectacular dawn raid on the Irish universities and recruited something over fifty per cent of the total annual output of Irish electrical engineers, simply because Ireland had a surplus of electrical engineers and Philips was short of them. There are some continental employers coming to Ireland and the UK, looking to make up shortages, mainly in technical areas, of people that they cannot recruit locally. The areas where most opportunities are occurring at the moment are amongst the larger industrial and commercial employers, either in technical functions, such as research and development or engineering or commercial functions like marketing and sales. The research functions tend particularly to favour PhDs.

Commercial functions are important especially in cases where transnational understanding comes in, for example in finance for people with qualifications in areas like accountancy. The situation is very difficult for those in personnel work, a favoured area for arts graduates in this country, since personnel is culturally and legally specific as well, which makes it a very difficult area in which to be mobile transnationally. In commerce, as opposed to industry, there are many opportunities for people to move around, particularly in international banking, accountancy, insurance, to a certain extent, and management consultancy. Such areas can provide good opportunities, but again, it is probably easier for people with experience. Other areas with potential are information technology, particularly in consultancy, for instance the big software consultants. There are some openings in the media, journalism, publishing and advertising, which is all private sector employment.

In the public sector, or at least the international public sector, such as the Community institutions, there are the same problems as in private sector employment of the relevance of degree. The whole recruitment system of Community institutions is really modelled on the French system, which expects its recruits to have gone to the Ecole Nationale

d'Administration, or a similar prestigious institution, and to have done a degree in what could be translated roughly as public administration. Those who are going to work in the public service should have a degree in a discipline such as law or economics. The tradition in the British civil service of recruiting any graduate of any discipline is total anathema to the continentals. The French take the view that a specialist should be turned into a generalist; the British take the view that the generalist should be turned into a specialist. The result is two irreconcilable views of the world.

The Community institutions are beginning to change, but they are also looking for people with relevant experience. Until recently, they did not generally recruit graduates straight from university. There is a new grade, the A8 grade, open to people with no professional or working experience, which one or two of the institutions, notably the Commission, have now adopted. Most of the recruitment is at the next grade up, A7, requiring two years of relevant professional experience, which may include postgraduate study. The barrier of that experience or the degree subject needing to be relevant remains, so there are still limitations.

My message is that there are more opportunities for people to be mobile within the Community, and the whole concept of the Community is going to make that easier. Progress on harmonisation legislation, the need for evening out skill shortages across the Community and the yet more important need for people who can operate at a Community level, rather than a purely national level, are going to improve these opportunities. British graduates must either have relevant skills and relevant degrees or they must acquire equivalent experience in the two or three years after graduation before they will be really employable in continental terms. The people who have degrees in languages and business studies or engineering and languages, or who simply have language skills grafted on to degrees in law, engineering, or business studies, or professional qualifications in those fields, are those who can be mobile immediately. The others will probably need to acquire their basic training and professional experience in this country first and then become mobile afterwards.

IV EMPLOYERS' NEEDS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The Place of Language Skills in Recruitment Policy and Practice

Martin Doble

Managing Director, The Addison Group, London and Pittsburgh

The Addison Group is a medium-sized management consultancy which specialises in business strategy. Our role is to act as external advisers and problem-solvers to a client base of international companies. From our offices in London (UK) and Pittsburg (US) we serve clients in Western Europe, Scandinavia, North and South America and Japan.

The tasks we undertake vary greatly in scale and scope, but have in common the need for clear, independent and perceptive analysis and problem-solving advice. In such a business, people — the consultants — constitute a prime asset. The success, style and scope of the business is largely a function of the quality and capabilities of the consultants. As a result, the recruitment of appropriate candidates is of fundamental importance and, in practice, very difficult.

The consultant is first and foremost a personality. He or she will be able to tackle a wide range of problems, on behalf of different companies, in many industries and countries. In this respect the work resembles that of a barrister. Consultants must also be able to analyse and research both abstract and specific problems, perhaps in the manner of an academic researcher. They must be able to relate to and deal with the problems of senior managers, requiring both diplomatic and managerial skills. They must also be able to interview individuals at any level within client and other businesses. In this respect, the work requires a combination of the skills of a public relations executive and those of a market researcher. Above all, however, the consultant is a personality made up of a combination of these qualities, which form a foundation for gaining insight into business problems and offering sound judgement.

In consultancy, and most financial services, a typical entry route will be through a good general degree, followed by junior work experience and an MBA. Whilst we do recruit people through these channels,

particularly in the US, our practice has been to draw from a wider catchment. In this respect we differ from some of our competitors, partly because being a smaller organisation places greater responsibility on all individuals, and partly because, having built up an individual style of consulting, two features stand out in our personnel profile: first, in order to develop our own style, we prefer to develop more senior consulting ability internally; second, and partially as a result of the first feature, we seek to recruit primarily at an entry level where we look for future senior consultants.

This means, in practice, that we recruit individuals of a high intellectual calibre with mature personal skills. We do not recruit consultants as specialists. In terms of our personnel profile, all consultants have a good first degree, and fifty-three per cent have at least one postgraduate qualification. The same proportion of consultants also have a formal business or economics qualification, but in the majority of cases in combination with additional qualifications or experience. It is interesting to note that the single largest area of qualification is that of language. Fifty-eight per cent of consultants have degrees in a language — including English — and sixty-five per cent of our consultants speak at least one foreign language.

Our recruitment policy holds two thrusts. First, we look for an individual with the necessary intellectual and analytical skills, who can also show evidence of existing and potential personal maturity, and, in particular, judgement. Second, we look for additional skills, which are likely to be learned skills. These may be technical, business, economics or practical management skills, gained through experience, or language skills. It is not simply a qualification in, or knowledge of, a language which is important, but rather the fact that we see a range of qualities associated with language skills. This may be illustrated by stressing three levels of our consultants' work in which linguistic ability — in the broadest sense — satisfies our requirements.

Communication ability is fundamental to consultants. This applies both in interpersonal skills and general articulacy, but also, in an international business such as ours, in the form of command of a foreign language. Straightforward language and linguistic and cultural knowledge is directly useful and is recognisable by our clients as part of the service we offer.

A second level of consulting work is about interpretation. This involves both the perception and elucidation of complex problems. Here, a sensitivity to layers of meaning and the importance of connotation and metaphor in both conceptual and practical issues is invaluable. Those

occasions when we have had to use interpreters illustrate how essential is a sensitivity to other levels of communication than purely denotation.

On a third level, the ability to develop high quality analysis of often vaguely articulated problems requires an understanding of how to structure these problems and generate an appropriate framework for using and presenting an analysis across a wide range of consulting projects. In this case, the elements of structural analysis, familiarity with a conceptual level of work and experience in drawing and summarising conclusions are all present in various combinations in language studies.

Thus, language ability is important to us because it is associated with a combination of the above qualities. In practice, these qualities will have been acquired and/or consolidated in a language degree. However, language ability in those otherwise qualified is also evidence of a personality with wider horizons and, probably, useful experience. This may be illustrated by comparing recruitment in the UK with that in the US. We find, consistently, that younger candidates in the US show lower levels of personal maturity and experience than those in the UK. In particular, we find in the US an emphasis on a range of business and technical skills, at the expense of an awareness of other cultures and conceptual abilities which are transferable across a range of tasks and problems. The experience of living and working in another culture is often associated with confident individuals, willing to take initiatives.

In summary, our requirements are primarily for intellectual and personal skills. Where these are combined with particular business or technical skills, gained either through qualification or work experience, the candidate may be seen to have an advantage. However, our consultants are not specialists who will be type-cast into particular roles. Familiarity with business practice and language will, of course, help some candidates to gain confidence and tackle certain problems faster initially. In the long term, however, we continue to stress the importance of a mature and able individual, who, by working with us, can gain not merely the technical skills but also the experience necessary to develop the knowledge base, confidence, judgement and insight to become a successful consultant.

What Courtaulds Wants from Graduates and What Language Graduates Should be Offering Employers

Diane Halfpenny

Courtaulds Plc, Coventry

Courtaulds Plc has over 60,000 employees worldwide, of whom 48,000 are UK-based. As more than half the Company's sales are for export, graduate linguists or native speakers of foreign languages are recruited for sales, marketing and commercial work. Most graduates start in sales, but opportunities exist to use business and language skills in many areas, including marketing and production. Often the work may not involve using languages initially which, on the surface, can be very frustrating. After appropriate training, through a combination of on-the-job experience and specific courses, the graduate is ready and well prepared for international exposure.

There is more to working abroad than just speaking the language. Many graduates today see their language as a means to an end, but in order to realise the opportunity of working in the international environment, there is an incredible amount to learn. Understanding the product is one thing, but understanding yourself and how to form working relations with people of a different cultural background is a large mine field.

International business and travel are tough: it is no holiday in the sunshine, coping with jet lag and stuffy hotel rooms. Much of the work done abroad by Company personnel is on their own, and, although the business day is active and people orientated, evenings and weekends can be an anti-climax. A weekend in Albania, for example, can be very lonely. Working on your own initiative will be part of the job. Dealing with people at a very senior political and industrial level might be required. Company representatives abroad are ambassadors, not only for businesses like Courtaulds but also for the UK.

Courtaulds are looking for individuals who have a personality that is robust and flexible and naturally outgoing, with the ability to assess and understand both people and situations. A genuine interest in foreign countries and their cultures is also important.

The Company expects its employees to possess a number of practical skills: the linguistic competence necessary to maintain an easy dialogue in a foreign language, sometimes with people who do not have it as a mother tongue (conversation in German with a Yugoslavian is very different from that with a German); the ability to organise and deal with unexpected situations with authorities (arranging visas, travel, hotels, meeting schedules), which at times require persistance; good strong negotiating skills; an ability to reason clearly and to be competitive; good communication skills and the knowledge of how to act as a vital communication link between the Company in a UK culture and the customer in a totally different environment, involving not only translation skills but also a high degree of recall (writing notes during a meeting may be considered impolite); the ability to give well thought-out recommendations, which are acceptable to both sides, because you are aware of hidden and manifest objectives, and to provide a good reasoned oral or written reportage on detailed projects and situations.

As far as languages are concerned, the basic skill requirement is a high standard of oral and written proficiency, suitable for commercial discussions. Courtaulds central trading requirements are quite specialised, and it is essential to have Russian, Polish, Japanese and Chinese speakers for the markets where the Company operates. Ideally it would also be useful to have other languages, such as Czech or Hungarian, but, as this is not practical, German and French are widely used as well as Spanish for Cuba.

The main objective of the people we employ must be to sell the Company's products effectively. The language itself is insufficient if employees cannot talk with authority about the Company's products. It is important to be able to assimilate product information rapidly and also use it to understand the customers' technical and production problems. Most products are sold to other industrial companies or retail organisations, and the Company is not generally looking for one-off sales. Repeat sales require personnel who can deal with long-term relationships and win wars, even if it means losing the occasional battle.

Aptitude and personality play such a major part in the success of the role of a manager in international business that languages, although very important, are a crucial secondary skill needed to complement the primary skills. Organisations need to see these skills clearly displayed before they feel confident in trying to realise someone's potential in the highly competitive international business environment.

Language Requirements at GKN Plc

David L Jones

Corporate Audit Department, GKN Plc, Redditch

In giving an insight into the use my Department makes of people with a language capability, it is useful to start by briefly summarising the work of GKN and its activities abroad, as well as indicating the role and responsibilities of the Corporate Audit Department.

GKN's activities can be split into three main geographical areas: UK, Europe, America, which account for about ninety-five per cent of the Group's activities by turnover; the remaining five per cent consists of activities in countries such as Japan, Australia and South Africa. Our dealings in these countries involve the languages listed in Table 1.

Table 1 *Languages used by GKN*

Country	Languages Used
France	French, English
Germany	German, English
Belgium	French, English
Holland	English
Denmark	English
Sweden	English
Italy	German, English
Spain	Spanish, French, English

The business activities are divided into three sectors: automotive, for example component manufacture and distribution; defence, design and manufacture of fighting vehicles; industrial services, waste disposal, pallet hire.

The Corporate Audit Department, which is based at our Head Office in Redditch, undertakes work on a world-wide basis throughout GKN. Our two main objectives are: to ensure protection of GKN's assets; to contribute to improved corporate profitability.

We achieve these objectives by completing audit assignments (each of about four weeks duration), which cover the subject areas shown in Table 2. This large subject range does, of course, have a tremendous

influence on the vocabulary needed to complete our assignment when we are working abroad.

Table 2 *Audit Subjects*

I		**Financial**
	—	Inventory Policy and Inventory Management
	—	Working Capital
	—	Costing
	—	Accounting Systems and Control
	—	Estimating and Pricing
	—	Control of Gross Margins
II		**Commercial**
	—	Purchasing and Payments
	—	Transport and Vehicle Management
	—	Marketing
	—	Sales Efficiency
III		**Manufacturing**
	—	Production Planning and Control
	—	Transport and Vehicle Management
	—	Marketing
	—	Sales Efficiency
IV		**Data-Processing**
	—	General Review of DP Strategy and Operations
	—	Major Operating Systems: Integrity and Efficiency
	—	New Systems under Development: Integrity and Efficiency
V		**Others**
	—	Personnel Policy and Practices
	—	Management of Research and Development

From a UK point of view, most of our foreign language needs are in Europe and can in the main be satisfied by French and German. Table 1 also shows the languages we use in the countries we have to visit. We make no attempt to learn the language in those countries where English is normally widely spoken as a second language.

From the point of view of our colleagues in Europe, their main foreign language needs are satisfied by English, and although we tend to think that foreigners are 'better' at languages than we are, this may be partially due to the fact that the British have the choice of many to learn, whereas they have a choice of one.

Before looking at what we would expect of a language graduate, it is important to examine why we need people who speak a foreign language and at what level their knowledge needs to be. One option that we have, of course, is not to speak the language ourselves, i.e. to use an

being the level of professional/technical knowledge required by the interpreter. Another option is to employ foreign nationals.

In terms of level, at one extreme, there are people who need the language to deal with hotels, meals, travel, telephoning, etc. At the other, there are those who would be speaking the language during the normal working day. In the case of our Department we need people who can discuss in detail any aspects of the subject range shown in Table 2. This leads to the question: where do we obtain such people?

In most cases, employees are recruited because of a need for a specific professional expertise (for example taxation, data processing, marketing). Language capability is nearly always a secondary requirement. Advertisements will say something like 'preference will be given to applicants with knowledge of German'.

In all cases, we need people who can communicate well in the foreign language. We have little need for linguists, translators, interpreters. In other words, grammatical accuracy is less important than being understood.

A few years ago, our Head Office carried out a survey of language abilities amongst GKN staff. Table 3 summarises the language capabilities found within a population of about three hundred people. They show an excellent general level of language capability, achieved as part of general recruitment. However, this does not mean that any of these people can necessarily be expected to operate successfully abroad.

Our experience of recruiting people, whom we intend to send abroad, is that considerable effort is required to ensure individuals have an appropriate level of vocabulary to undertake their work there. This also applies to employees whose academic attainment in a language is high, even at the level of a languages graduate.

We currently employ two people who took a language as part of a degree course. One of them initially got a degree in French and German and has since qualified as an accountant. His reason for doing so was to improve his chances of advancement in industry after spending some time teaching. His degree course in French and German concentrated on literature. This type of degree does not make entry into industry easy. Perhaps it was never intended to. The other auditor took German at university as part of a degree course in accountancy. Both these people can be seen as accountants who can speak German rather than linguists who can do accountancy.

In conclusion, any multinational company has a need for people with language capability. In order to be able to work abroad, one must be able to communicate with colleagues or business people at a very detailed level. The main difficulty which exists is the wide variety of

Table 3 *Language Abilities of GKN staff*

Language	Number of People									
	Total	F	VG	VGWK	G	GWK	C	WK	BWK	SK
French	102	8	1	2	1	6		19		65
German	61	4	2	6		7	1	9	5	27
Italian	8	2	1			1		2		2
Spanish	7	1				1		3		2
Russian	4	1						2		1
Latvian	2	1						1		
Polish	1							1		
Portuguese	1	1								
Dutch	1							1		
Greek	1									1
Japanese	3					1		1		1
Farsi	1							1		
Arabic	2							1		1
Urdu	1		1							
Bengali	1									1
Hindustani	2		1					1		
Chinyanja	1				1					
Swahili	1	1								

Key to headings:

F	=	Fluent
VG	=	Very Good
VGWK	=	Very Good Working Knowledge
GWK	=	Good Working Knowledge
C	=	Competent
WK	=	Working Knowledge
BWK	=	Basic Working Knowledge
SK	=	Some Working Knowledge

vocabulary which is necessary to do this, coupled with technical and professional expertise. The needs of a lawyer discussing product liability are different from those of a chemist discussing the properties of a particular type of steel. We need to guard against sending people to operate abroad just because they can speak the language. This means that professional people need to learn the language themselves. This should start in the schools and be continued in universities with more emphasis placed on oral proficiency and business and economic affairs.

How and Why Beecham Products Wants to Recruit Linguists

John A S Watson

Beecham Products, Brentford

Higher education as a preparation for an international career is relevant to my own work in a number of ways.

Firstly, my job search experience as a graduate in German and French proved to me that even in 1952-53 very few people wanted linguists as such. I settled gratefully for a generalist personnel job, and it was in the context of that profession that I have been able to put my languages to good use.

Secondly, as a recruiter for two large international concerns my remit has always been to seek out those who want to, and on their track record are likely to, make it first and foremost in a specific function. If by chance the candidate presents one or more foreign languages this is a bonus. I have never recruited someone whose chief objective is to use languages and who wants to use marketing or whatever as a means to that end.

Thirdly, on milkround visits I have often been appalled at the ingenuousness of some of the purely academically-based linguists, even if they have selected a specific function. They often have no appreciation of the rough and tumble of competitive business and little aptitude for handling it.

Fourthly, I have become increasingly interested in the relevance of the work of multi-centred business schools and of certain polytechnics and colleges of higher education, which are twinned with European institutions as part of the course and offer a common degree recognised in more than one country. Examples of such business schools are EAP (the Ecole des Affaires de Paris), which operates in Paris, Berlin and Oxford and EBS (the European Business School), which started in Germany and is now active also in London, Paris, Madrid, Rome and hopefully soon in Shanghai. These offer degree-level qualifications.

Fifthly, there are developments affecting graduate recruitment in my own company which are probably shared by others.

Beecham Products employs 14,000 people worldwide, 4,500 in the UK, the remainder overseas, plus 2,600 in minority owned companies in

India and Nigeria. It comprises the following Divisions: Food and Drink; Proprietaries; International; Western Hemisphere (US Domestic and Central and South America). Beecham has grown both organically and, to a larger extent, by acquisition. In most major countries we have separate corporate entities. Other territories are covered by exporting and by franchised manufacturing and distribution.

In most of our overseas corporate operations, particularly in Europe and North America, we are able to rely totally on local human resources, although one or two of the very top executives may be expatriates of UK origin.

The *lingua franca* of Beecham is English, and top managers of practically all companies have a good working knowledge of that language. Indeed, the up and coming people in our European companies are likely to be quite proficient in English. This means that we do not need to recruit British people who speak European languages in order to communicate.

However, the need to develop and extend so-called 'core' brands internationally means that commercial executives, in particular, must be alive to all the factors which impinge on the likelihood of the successful launch of a given product in a given country. These factors include culture and attitudes, taste — both physical and conceptual — activities and products of competitors, positioning, pricing, patterns of usage and distribution, business methods in general, etc.

We are therefore thinking in terms of recruiting people, both in the UK and on the continent, who in the first two years or so of their marketing career would be placed in another country than their own. For this to happen they would need to be fluent in another language.

To return to my second point, we shall be seeking people who are first and foremost commercially oriented and have perhaps already demonstrated an aptitude in that area through some practical business activity in a foreign country as part of their study course. Indeed we would hope to be able to offer a limited number of such work experience opportunities as a means of pre-selecting graduates who would like to face the challenge of working for an exciting company such as Beecham.

I suspect we are not alone in this, and we welcome anything the universities, polytechnics and business schools can do to produce the sort of people we are seeking.

V THE GRADUATE'S EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Working as an External Trade Executive for the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Limited

Philip Jones

External Trade, SMMT, London

Having graduated in 1980 with a degree in modern languages (French and German), I am currently employed as the External Trade Executive for Europe at the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

After graduating, I worked for a Dutch publishing company called VNU, in their advertising sales department. Excellent training was provided by the company in sales, management and general business know-how. Apart from a six month period on a publication called *Techtrade*, which was a cooperation project with French, Belgian and West German partners, there was little opportunity to use the language skills learnt at Aston. Moreover, in four and a half years I never had to speak Dutch.

From VNU, I moved to British Telecom where I stayed for approximately one year as a marketing manager in one of their numerous departments. This experience, together with that at VNU, helped to teach me the essential business and commercial experience that I had not learnt at Aston. It was vital after leaving university to learn the rough and tumble of business. Without this experience I would not have ended up in the position that I am currently enjoying at the SMMT. Despite the frustration of five and a half years of not being able to use my language skills, it was important to gain this experience before being in a position to combine language and business skills in a job.

I came to be employed at the SMMT because I happened to be in the right place at the right time. A combination of persistence and good luck in my case has finally brought rewards.

The SMMT is the automotive trade association in the UK with a total membership of approximately 1,500 companies. These include UK car manufacturers such as the Rover Group, Ford and Vauxhall, together with truck manufacturers such as Leyland DAF, amongst others. The membership of the SMMT also includes a considerable number of component manufacturers, for example, GKN and Lucas, who are a very large employer in the West Midlands area, and many other companies who make anything from stick-on stripes and car aerials to much more sophisticated components for vehicles. The SMMT is probably best known for organising the Motor Show every two years at the National Exhibition Centre, but this is just one of the many tasks carried out by the SMMT working in several departments from a headquarters in London. Considerable foreign travel is undertaken particularly by the External Trade Department.

This Department is responsible for the members' interests with regard to exporting, including giving advice, promoting and representing the industry overseas. The Department concerns itself with a large number of international trade policy questions. The seven External Trade Executives have a variety of language skills amongst them, being responsible for a wide selection of territories throughout the world. There are four French, two German, two Spanish, one Chinese and one Portuguese speaker. Each External Trade Executive travels on trips of anything between one to three weeks on average.

The tasks of each member of the Department vary slightly. Three of the principle activities concentrate on trade missions, both overseas and inward missions to the UK, producing market reports on the overseas territories for the members and exhibition work, which includes visiting exhibitions as well as organising groups stands with the British Overseas Trade Board under the Joint Venture Scheme. To illustrate these tasks with a few examples from my own experience, I have undertaken visits to most of the major vehicle manufacturers in Western Europe to promote the component industry of the UK. These have resulted in a variety of different initiatives with these companies, including BMW, Renault, Bosch and DAF of the Netherlands, but there are many others planned for the near future. Amongst the overseas Motor Shows that I have visited are the large ones at Frankfurt and Paris and several smaller shows in other Western European countries. Another interesting part of the job concerns Eastern Europe, and in particular Czechoslovakia, where the UK motor industry is involved in a long-term cooperation project with the industry which is particularly relevant to language study.

Foreign language skills were an essential prerequisite for the job, whereas technical skills were not required. In Western Europe, the German Federal Republic and France are two of the major forces, and it is therefore essential to be able to speak with representatives of the industries in those two countries in their mother tongue as an aid to exporting the products of the UK motor industry. French is also very useful in North Africa, territories for which I am responsible, whereas German is of immense importance in the Eastern bloc countries, where it is regarded as their principle business language, apart from their own native languages. For those countries in Eastern Europe, West Germany is a very significant trading partner.

Both French and German are used in three main ways in the job at the SMMT, namely in conversation, correspondence and analysis of the media in the countries that I have already mentioned. The position of External Trade Executive could be called that of a communicator, not only in French and German or other foreign languages, but also in English. It should never be overlooked that English is still the prime business language of the world, even in the automotive industry, and being able to speak foreign languages is therefore not sufficient.

In the summer of 1987, an All Party Report on the motor industry highlighted, amongst other things, the need for language skills in the international environment of the motor industry. The Report commented that the growing international structure of the industry had not been well understood by a large number of UK companies involved in the motor industry. Therefore, one of the conclusions was that there was a growing need for foreign language speakers to be employed by the UK motor industry, ideally equipped with a technical knowledge, but it was recognised that this was not always possible.

To conjecture upon the future, the motor industry is becoming more and more international, both in terms of sales and the sourcing of components for vehicles. The industry in the UK is in a very healthy position with increased production and increased registrations in 1987.

The motor industry can therefore be seen to be an area of some potential for language graduates. It is also offering potential for many other graduates, as it is now considered to be one of the most buoyant industries in the UK, second only to the oil industry in volume of exports. This is well recognised by the SMMT who have undertaken a Motor Industry Campaign, highlighting the opportunities for employment and investment. A specific part of this campaign deals with ensuring that higher and secondary education are made aware of such opportunities.

In conclusion, like most of the other contributors, I am convinced that business and language skills complement each other perfectly in the international environment of business in which we are all now working. It is encouraging to hear of the growth of business and language courses in higher education. Unfortunately not enough employers appreciate the value of this close link between the two skills, namely business and languages. Language skills tend still to be regarded as a novelty and are consequently underpaid. This is not to decry the new technological skills which many of the graduates from the UK higher education system are now learning, but maybe languages should be considered as a similar skill.

From Languages to Engineering and Export Sales with Alcan Plate

Joan C Stacey

Export Sales, Alcan Plate Limited, Birmingham

Before obtaining my current post as an Export Sales Representative with Alcan Plate, based in Birmingham, I studied French and Spanish at Heriot-Watt in Edinburgh, graduating in July 1986. Although the course at Heriot-Watt is essentially vocational training for a career as an interpreter or translator, I opted for a job in industry since my interest had gradually been moving in that direction during the four years at university.

After going through the time-consuming process of looking for such a job, but one which would also require the ability to conduct business in French and Spanish, I was offered and accepted the position at Alcan.

The company recognised that, in Europe at least, it is essential for the sales representative to be able to communicate in the relevant languages. The ideal candidate for the job would probably have been someone who studied two languages and metallurgy to degree level with an MBA thrown in for good measure. Realising the slim chances of finding such a candidate, however, Alcan chose someone with a linguistic background, an interest in industry and some level of technical ability (nothing more than O-Level in my case). The choice was made on the basis that it would be easier to teach a linguist a sufficient level of metallurgy and, of course, sales technique, than it would have been to teach a metallurgist two or even three languages from scratch.

As an Export Sales Representative I report to an Export Sales Manager who, in turn, reports to the Sales and Marketing Director. I am responsible for Alcan's aluminium plate sales to France, Benelux, Spain and Portugal, the main market sectors being aerospace, general engineering and defence. We are represented by agents in these countries, my role being to ensure the smooth functioning of the customer/ agent/plant relationship as seen through the sales performance.

This involves regular travel to the countries concerned, approximately one third of my time being spent abroad visiting customers with the agents. From these visits I am able to analyse market

needs and developments first hand and respond to these by formulating and implementing sales strategies.

There is also the more 'routine' side to the job: day-to-day liaising between the agents and the plant; answering enquiries; writing reports in order that the information I obtain from the market reaches the relevant departments (for example, I write one report for every customer visit and one general monthly report); evaluating situations as they arise and deciding on the most suitable course of action.

Aluminium plate is a highly technical product, so inevitably I also need to have an understanding of the metallurgy and production routes involved. Before joining Alcan I had no interest in metallurgy as such. The company has, however, provided excellent in-house training, and I have also attended a course at Birmingham University. Although I have technical support at the plant, as the Kitts Green representative in the territories I cover, I need to be able to give an informed answer to customer queries.

In order to provide these answers I can draw on my own limited knowledge, but what is even more important is the ability to understand and communicate with technical and production people so that I can pass the relevant information on to the customer. In short, communication is required at all levels and in every direction.

The most obvious way in which my university course has helped me in the job is, of course, through the emphasis that was placed on the oral side of the languages studied. The content of our lectures was always based on current affairs, economics, industry and science, so I have become aware of and developed an interest in what influences are at play in the countries concerned. My two dissertations, which I based on industry and commerce, served as an introduction to arranging and conducting interviews. The year spent abroad developed my knowledge of both the language and customs of the countries concerned. I also had the opportunity to study subjects outside the languages department. This enables the student to tailor the course even more closely to his/her requirements. Finally, the very experience of going on to further education does, in itself, serve as preparation for a job such as mine since a great deal of self-discipline is required, as is the ability to meet deadlines.

Working in France for Philips Electronics

Julian Staniforth

Philips Electronics, France

After obtaining a Combined Honours degree in French and Business Administration from Aston University in 1982, like most of my fellow students, I started by working in a UK based company in a specific discipline which had little to do with languages. I was employed as a Graduate Trainee Management Accountant with Philips Electronics, the UK arm of the Dutch multinational.

The language component in my degree may have been a consideration in my recruitment, but the most significant factor was undoubtedly my perceived ability to emerge at the end of three years work and study as a qualified accountant. During these three years my knowledge of French was unimportant compared to understanding and assimilating management accounting.

Philips has a policy of recruiting locally for its national organisations, and the internal international language is English, so the ability to speak another language is very much a secondary concern. This was certainly the case at the time when I was recruited. There were possibilities for working abroad, but they depended on the individual taking the initiative and generally arose for people with technical expertise. Ironically they are often the least likely to have a foreign language, despite the increasingly international nature of technology research and development.

It therefore looked as if I would not be able to use my foreign language, and until recently I had resigned myself to not being able to apply my French in my work if I stayed with Philips. Yet I now find myself in France, working for a French subsidiary of the Philips group, a situation which has arisen as a result of being a language graduate. To explain how this came about, I need to say more about how the Company has changed.

Philips is a well-known multinational, but in many respects it has only recently become international. The structure of the organisation was such that it used to provide a large degree of autonomy for each national organisation: Philips UK for the UK, Philips France for France, etc. Effectively each country produced and sold to meet the needs of its local markets. Inevitably there was an international dimension through

Holland's Product Division, but the power lay more with the national organisations. This structure survived for some twenty to thirty years while countries were able to be profitable. However, like many companies, Philips caught a cold in the 1980s and found that it had to adapt. The outcome is that the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction whereby the centre of power is moving from the national organisation, dealing local for local, to the Product Division, with global responsibility for marketing goods produced in several international centres for world markets.

As part of the shift from national to international at the product and marketing level there have also been changes as far as personnel are concerned. The Company appears to have realised that there is less reason for career progression to follow national patterns as it did in the past, particularly in the middle echelons of the organisation. There have always been international transfers: opportunities existed in administrative functions but tended to be at the highest level, with the 'Flying Dutchman Syndrome' foremost. Against the developing background of internationalisation in the last two years the financial and accounting sections have set up an exchange scheme between the four European national organisations in France, Germany, Holland and the UK. Young accountants (in their late twenties) have the opportunity to gain international experience in each other's organisations.

This is where the advantage of being a language graduate comes into play, since few accountants in Philips UK have a second language to call upon. In my case language studies at Aston have meant that I am able to integrate easily into the Company in France. It was felt that I could become more useful much more quickly than a colleague who would have to learn the language first and would therefore not be fully operational for several months.

Whilst English may be the international language, in the French national organisation the working language is French. My competence in French was presumably taken as evidence that I was adaptable and open to living in another culture. In itself my language would not have been sufficient for me to be considered for the scheme; it was a secondary condition compared with the required level of professional experience and knowledge. This underlines the commonly held view that language is a means to an end rather than the end in itself and a supplementary skill to the main skills.

Whether this example means that Philips or other such companies will start to recruit people with graduate level languages is hard to say, but expertise in languages could become a more important factor than it has been in the past. In particular, specialists in technical, marketing or

financial subjects with a language will be needed more and more. Already there are several international research and development centres with multinational staff, yet engineers and scientists are often going on secondment in other countries without a language background, because of the divide which persists in the British educational system between the arts and the sciences.

A Graduate's Experience as a Marketing Manager with Hewlett-Packard

Cathryn Whiteside

Business Systems Marketing Group, Hewlett-Packard, Wokingham

My paper concentrates on the development of my career, from the start of my university education in 1978 through to the present time, pursuing a career in marketing. It takes close account of the major decisions which have to be made during that period and records my own expectations from working life.

Upper sixth form led me to few definite conclusions other than the choice of a university degree course in modern languages in a contemporary setting (the latter was very important). Certainly I found that at Aston, but I found more besides: I found myself and the near-real-world. Discovering that modern Britain had more need of accountants and technologists, than stand-alone modern linguists (to borrow a term from computerspeak) was one of the really useful things I learnt from university.

No regrets accompanied the four years spent studying French and German, recognising the benefits of specialisation, seeing the importance of communication in its widest sense. I learnt how to build bridges between different cultural groups, which was put to the test during a year's work placement in the German Federal Republic. In short I developed an international outlook.

Early in my final year I saw my opportunities in that splendid British invention — the 'non relevant graduate career' — and jumped on the milkround to seek out a quality company, with emphasis on graduate management training.

Espousing the 'minister without portfolio' approach unleashed me from the difficult task in the UK of finding a career using languages (outside the classroom). Like many Aston graduates before and after me, the job market appeared well disposed to my commodity.

Turning commodities (non-relevant-degree-graduates) into value-added products (in my case a marketing manager) is a period of steep investment for both employer and employee alike. For me it involved intensive training, accompanied by a formal period of study in management, lasting some two and half years.

I was fortunate to be in good hands. Postgraduation has been characterised by two main employers. I believe moving jobs is good for you. My needs were refining all the time. Amongst the pre-interview check-list for my current employer, Hewlett-Packard, was a position offering: broad scope of marketing opportunities; an industry of the future; excellent training and development; overseas assignments with possibilities for using languages.

It is not surprising that Hewlett Packard, as an American owned computer manufacturer, has made the fluent usage of the English (American) language a condition of employment. So in spite of my current role as Marketing Program Manager, relying heavily on support from the German software division, my effectiveness is not enhanced by my knowledge of German.

My effectiveness today means harnessing business and marketing skills (knowledge of the market place, understanding the company's strengths, etc) and the ageless enrichment of lifeskills, the most important of which are: communicating, influencing and persuading.

What I am doing today owes much to the timely acknowledgement of my need to regard my degree course as a gate-opener, whilst accepting that the real preparation for my career happened later. The central theme to my career has been to seize opportunities as they arise, with the prime criterion that of getting experience.

What of the future? Maybe an MBA and probably time to take a look at careers in management using languages.

Notes on Contributors

Dennis E Ager is Professor of Modern Languages in the Department of Modern Languages at Aston University. He has conducted several studies of the language needs of industry and initiated the establishment of International Consultants with an award under the PICKUP scheme. He has recently completed a study of the language tasks performed by graduates in international settings, with support from the British Academy.

Martin Doble is a graduate in Modern Languages from Aston University, who took his MPhil and DPhil at Oxford and is now a Managing Director of the Addison Group, an international management consultancy specialising in business strategy, with headquarters in London and Pittsburgh.

Diane Halfpenny graduated in Marine Biology from Stirling University in 1981. She took up a production management post with Gossard Ltd (the Underwear Group of Courtaulds) and in 1984 transferred into Central Human Resources as Training and Recruitment Assistant. In 1986 she became the Graduate Recruitment Manager with Courtaulds Plc in Coventry, responsible for the annual recruitment of 200 graduates.

David L Jones is a Manager in the Corporate Audit Department of GKN Plc in Redditch. His Department monitors the performance of overseas subsidiary companies of GKN.

Philip Jones graduated in Modern Languages from Aston University in 1980. Since 1986 he has been employed by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders in London in the External Trade Department, having previously worked with a Dutch publishing company, VNU, and British Telecom. He is responsible for Europe, North Africa, Turkey and Israel.

Edmond Lisle is currently the Director of the International Comparative Studies Programme in Social Sciences, with the CNRS in Paris. He has been closely involved in setting up and running the Franco-British Programme of Research in the Social Sciences. He was a founder member of the European Network for Research into Education and Training and was convenor for the working party on Training for

International Careers. He has also given very active support to the programmes of international studies which have been established in some of the *grandes écoles* in France.

Philip McGeevor is Senior Researcher in the Department of Social Sciences at South Bank Polytechnic. With John Brennan (Registrar for Information Services at the Council for National Academic Awards) he has been involved for several years in a large-scale follow-up study of graduate careers, under the Higher Education and the Labour Market research scheme, sponsored by the CNAA. The research has resulted in a large number of publications, the most recent being *Graduates at Work: Degree Courses and the Labour Market* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1988).

Colin Mellors lectures in the Undergraduate School of Studies in European Studies at the University of Bradford. With Nigel Copperthwaite he conducted a follow-up survey of graduates from the European Studies course at Bradford, and he is currently organising a nationwide survey of the career paths of European Studies graduates under the auspices of the UACES.

Tony J Raban is a Careers Adviser with the Cambridge University Careers Service. He has published *Working in the European Communities: A Guide for Graduate Recruiters and Job-seekers* (CRAC Guidance Resources Series, Hobsons, Cambridge, 1985), which deals with Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands. The Supplement includes sections on Denmark, Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom. A new edition which also covers Greece and Luxemburg was published in May 1988. He has also jointly authored an Information Booklet on the European Community's Institutions for use in careers services.

Joan C Stacey graduated in Languages from Heriot-Watt and is working for Alcan Plates Ltd, a subsidiary of British Alcan Plc, in the Export Sales Department, in Birmingham, with responsibility for the Benelux countries, France, Portugal and Spain.

Julian Staniforth graduated in Combined Honours (French and Busniess Administration) from Aston University in 1982. Since graduation he has been employed with Philips Electronics as a management accountant, at first in the UK and subsequently in France.

Bernd Wächter is the Foreign Studies Coordinator in the Languages Department at the University of Kassel in Western Germany. He has been closely involved with student exchange programmes, and in particular with a project concerned with the linguistic and intercultural preparation of students spending a year abroad under the ERASMUS or COMETT schemes.

John A S Watson is Personnel Services Manager with the Beecham Group and works for Beecham Products at its headquarters in Brentford. The Group has subsidiary and corporate entities in most European countries and in many countries elsewhere in the world.

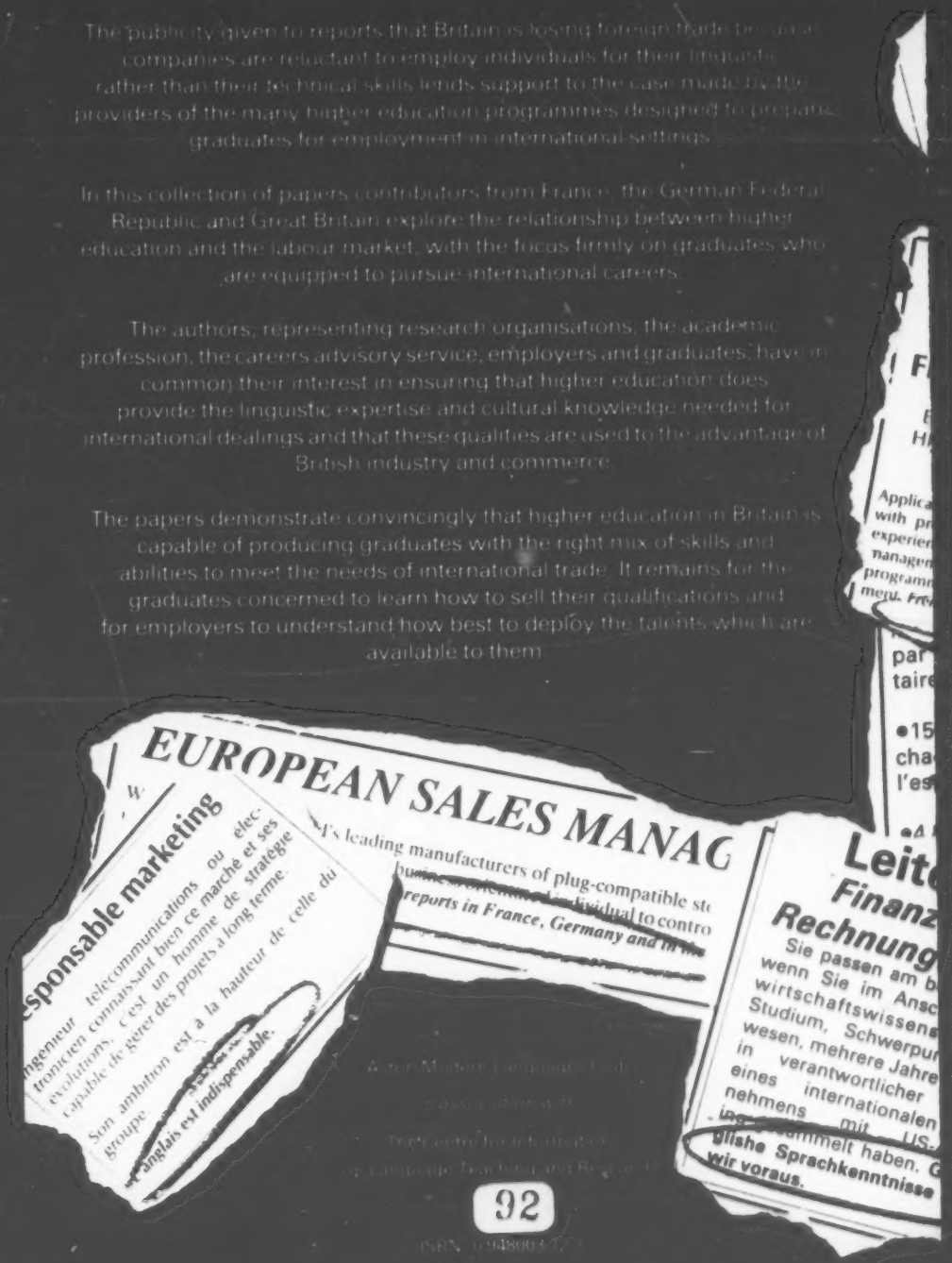
Cathryn Whiteside is a former student from Aston University who graduated in Modern Languages in 1982, and is now working in the Business Systems Marketing Group of Hewlett Packard. She was sponsored by the company to take a Postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies.

The publicity given to reports that Britain is losing foreign trade because companies are reluctant to employ individuals for their linguistic rather than their technical skills lends support to the case made by the providers of the many higher education programmes designed to prepare graduates for employment in international settings.

In this collection of papers contributors from France, the German Federal Republic and Great Britain explore the relationship between higher education and the labour market, with the focus firmly on graduates who are equipped to pursue international careers.

The authors, representing research organisations, the academic profession, the careers advisory service, employers and graduates, have in common their interest in ensuring that higher education does provide the linguistic expertise and cultural knowledge needed for international dealings and that these qualities are used to the advantage of British industry and commerce.

The papers demonstrate convincingly that higher education in Britain is capable of producing graduates with the right mix of skills and abilities to meet the needs of international trade. It remains for the graduates concerned to learn how to sell their qualifications and for employers to understand how best to deploy the talents which are available to them.



92

ISBN 0 948004 72 3